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ABSTRACT

This research paper presents a learners' perspective on (the promotion of) learner autonomy and Self-Access Language Learning in an English Proficiency Program. It provides an evaluation of the success of these course elements as well as an interpretation of students' understanding of the related concepts. Finally, it identifies factors that enhance or hinder the successful implementation of Self-Access Language Learning. Both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used to elicit data that gives insight into learners' perceptions of the issues under review. Self-Access Language Learning was evaluated positively by the students, both as a means to learn English and as a means to develop independent learning skills. The study identified a number of factors that contributed to these perceptions. It also revealed that students' understanding of independent learning was rather shallow. Finally, a number of recommendations were made for a successful implementation of Self-Access Language Learning into a curriculum. (Contains approximately 177 bibliographic references.) (Author/SM)

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DO IT YOURSELF ?
A Learners' Perspective on Learner Autonomy and Self-Access Language Learning in an English Proficiency Programme.

Hayo Reinders

ED 477 552

Preface

This study was submitted on July 15 2000 by Hayo Reinders to fulfil part of the requirements for obtaining the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

I would like to thank my supervisor dr. Hilde Hacquebord, for her continuous support and encouragement as well as the opportunities that she has offered me, not only during the time that this thesis was written but over the past few years. I would also like to thank Sara Cotterall who was my supervisor during my internship at Victoria University Wellington, New Zealand, where this research was carried out. She has been, and continues to be, a wonderful source of inspiration.

Furthermore, I would like to thank all the teachers in the English Proficiency Programme for their help in administering questionnaires, participating in discussions etc. But most of all, I would like to thank them for their friendliness. The same applies to the staff in the Self-Access Centre (Karen Boxall, Heike Albrecht, Richard Keenan and Irina Elgort), who helped me whenever they could and with whom I had a great time. I would like to make special mention of Edith Hodgen (School of Mathematical and Computing Sciences), who helped with the statistical analyses for this report and Deborah Willis (School of Psychology) for her advice on Metacognition and Awareness.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the following people for helping me, keeping up with me and encouraging me during my studies : my parents, Kwasiba and Alexa de Paris.

Abstract

This research presents a learners' perspective of (the promotion of) learner autonomy and Self-Access Language Learning in an English Proficiency Programme. It provides an evaluation of the success of these course elements as well as an interpretation of students' understanding of the related concepts. Finally it identifies factors that enhance or hinder the successful implementation of Self-Access Language Learning. Both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used to elicit data that gives insight into learners' perceptions of the issues under review. Self-Access Language Learning was evaluated positively by the students, both as a means to learn English and as a means to develop independent learning skills. The study identified a number of factors that contributed to these perceptions. It also revealed that students' understanding of independent learning is rather shallow. Finally a number of recommendations were made for a successful implementation of Self-Access Language Learning into a curriculum.

Rationale for the Study

The field of language learning has been in a constant state of motion over the last twenty years. The main change has been a shift of focus onto the language learner. The reasons for this shift are twofold : both goals of language learning and insights into the process of language learning have changed. Society has posed its demands on education and has influenced its shape. Research in fields such as psychology, cognitive psychology, sociology, linguistics and others, have added to our knowledge of how language learning takes place. These two developments have, among others, led to a greater interest in Learner Autonomy.

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Learner Autonomy is as Little (1991) describes it, the new 'buzz-word' in the field of applied linguistics. Like its precursor, communicative language learning, it is starting to be an unquestionable goal and integral part of language learning methodologies throughout the world. Large amounts of time, energy and money are spent on its promotion and implementation. This is especially true for Self-Access Centres (henceforth SAC), which are believed to be an effective means to the desired end of learner autonomy. However its implementation has a considerable influence over educational practice and involves changing roles for teachers and learners, both of whom may wish to retain the status quo. For Self-Access Language Learning (henceforth SALL) to be accepted by them (as well as by parents, management etc), it needs to prove that it has things to offer that other types of educational provisions do not. If it is primarily aimed at developing learner autonomy, it needs to be shown that that is what it does. If it claims that it allows learners to learn better or faster, then that needs to be proven. If there are additional advantages to it, then they need to be identified.

This, however, is notoriously difficult and empirical evidence a sheer impossibility. Most research in this field therefore relies on the learner as the main source of information. It is thus crucial to explore learners' understanding of the concepts and phenomena under review. Also, any misconceptions are likely to influence the success of language learning methodologies based on the promotion of learner autonomy and of SALL. There is now a large body of literature on learner beliefs, however very little in conjunction with actual learning situations. Evaluations and descriptions of learner experiences in a particular course or environment are scarce. Little can therefore be said about the efficiency and effectiveness of SACs.

The success of a SAC also relies on a clear understanding of the obstacles it poses to its users as well as on an identification of the factors that enhance efficient and effective use. Few evaluations exist to date to give us insight into these matters. There is a need for a practical evaluation from the students' perspective, on a sound theoretical basis. This study aims to provide some of the answers that previous research has left open.

Chapter 1 : Autonomy in Language Learning: an Overview

1.1 Introduction

Changes in society have influenced the goals of language teaching and learning throughout the world. At the same time new insights into language acquisition, language use, learning styles etcetera have increased our understanding of what the process involves. We will describe these changing goals and new insights below. Especially where they are relevant to our discussion of the development of the concept of learner autonomy. Of course it is not possible to give a linear account of a process that has spanned decades and that has its roots in a large number of interacting disciplines. However, for reasons of clarity we will discuss these disciplines and their influence separately.

1.2 Political developments

Autonomy as a political concept originated perhaps as early as with Aristotle and has, mainly through Kant, played an important role in both the philosophical and practical expression of political developments in the 20th century. After WW II a great number of minority rights movements (feminist, ethnic etc) sprang up that used the concept to express their ideas about the right to freedom of choice. They regarded education as an empowering tool that would instil in people an awareness of these issues. As Jane (1977, cited by Holec 1981, p.3) says :

> 'Adult education should become an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man, and, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man 'product of his society', one moves to the idea of man as 'producer of his society'.'

It is the individual who is responsible and active in shaping his or her own life and therefore that of others. Education has to prepare learners for this, which involves teaching them the skills necessary to take control over the processes and content of learning. In the words of Collins & Hammond (1991, p.13) '...it begins with the assumption that the ultimate purpose of education is the betterment of society, and that critical awareness and social action to promote emancipation are desirable results of any educational intervention'. A later development of this thinking is the Language Awareness Movement (Hawkins 1981, 1984, James & Garrett 1991) and related approaches (cf. Van Lier 1995). These recognised the political influence of ideas that learners hold about learning, their own and others peoples' language, its use and its consequences. Their aim is to increase peoples' awareness of the political aspect of language. These developments have had a considerable influence on the concept of learner autonomy.

1.3 Societal demands

After WWII the demand for foreign and second languages sharply increased (Gremmo and Riley 1995). International trade, easier communication, cheaper transport, international political developments (with the founding of organisations such as the UN), and migratory movements all led to an increase in the teaching of foreign and second languages. These developments also influenced the content of what was taught, as communicative skills became more important than ever before. Broady & Kenning (1996, p.10) link this to a demand for different skills :

> 'Using language effectively for communication involves negotiation of meaning, rather than mere decoding of linguistic tokens, thus requiring the ability to cope confidently with unpredictable information.'

Global changes in the availability of information (cheaper print materials, computer databases, the internet) also heavily influenced what is expected from people nowadays in terms of dealing with large amounts of (new) information, relating it to other information and interpreting it (Pemberton 1996). People need skills that allow them to adapt to quickly changing circumstances and develop new skills, for there is no longer a fixed body of knowledge that can be transmitted onto learners. The increase in the number of university students has resulted in rising costs. It is no longer possible to teach all students all they need to know (Trim 1976). Crabbe (1993, p.443) cites Van Ek (1975):

> 'The economic argument is that society does not have the resources to provide the level of personal instruction needed by all its members in every area of learning. Therefore individuals must be able to provide for their own learning needs ... if they are to acquire the knowledge and skill they want.'

Changes in society have led to the need for life-long learning. Education today must provide the skills necessary for this process. On an international level, the European Council has recognised this and stimulated research into this area. Several reports with recommendations have resulted from this (Holec 1994, Holec, Little & Richterich 1996, Holec & Huttunen 1997).

1.4 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics views language as inseparable from its sociocultural context. Discourse analysis studies language in use (Garfinkel 1967), ethnolinguistics studies language as related to certain groups of people (race, gender, age) (Labov 1972), ethnography of communication (Hymes 1972, Gumerpz and Hymes 1972) and sociology of language (Fishman 1972) are yet other disciplines in the sociocultural tradition. Although these disciplines have different foci, they share some common beliefs. One of them is that language is a tool for communication that takes place in a social context. Individuals with personal needs and intentions learn to express themselves in relation to the group they are part of. They use the language to share and maintain, or change a certain social reality. In order to do so, they need to acknowledge this social reality in their speech. The term 'communicative competence' relates to this. It is knowing when and

where to say what to whom. In their view it is not enough to learn a language (the linguistic features of it), but one also needs to be able to use it appropriately.

What is important for our discussion is that it places emphasis on peoples' uniqueness because of their sociocultural background and the importance of allowing social reality to be a part of classroom teaching and learning. Because social reality changes constantly and because learners influence it, teachers cannot teach everything about a language. Learners influence the social context and therefore the language, or at least its use. Learners therefore become more important members of a classroom. So classroom learning should take learners' backgrounds into account if it wishes to provide a meaningful and stimulating learning environment.

1.5 Psychology

Pyschology also started to focus more on the individual. This was partly as a reaction against the 1950's and 1960's behaviourism that saw learning as synonymous with a change in behaviour. Many psychologists felt the individual human being to be missing from this model. For them the individual should be given a central place in his or her own development. Constructivism has had a great influence in this respect. It opposes positivist views of the world that see knowledge as an accurate reflection of objective reality. Knowledge, in positivist terms, can be discovered and also taught. Constructivism, however, sees knowledge as a reorganisation and restructuring of experience, that cannot be taught, because it is unique for every individual (cf.Candy 1989). Learners thus actively construct their own target language. In psychology, humanism as 'the study of personality focussing on the individual's *subjective* experience – his or her personal view of the world' (Atkinson 1993, p.544) becomes influential. It gives a central place to the unique individual. Experiences and insights are more important than behaviour.

> 'it is not the events and texts themselves that are ingrained in his memory but the object of his attentions. How he has apprehended the matter and what he has done with it.' (Kelly 1955, p.35)

In his theory of personal constructs, George Kelly tried to discover the dimensions that individuals use themselves (and not psychologists for them) to interpret or to construct themselves and their social worlds (Atkinson 1993, p.548), believing that individuals hypothesise about and formulate their own theories about the world. In learning (for the influence of these ideas on educational theory and especially the distinction between rote learning and meaningful learning, see Ausubel 1963), this active and subjective process of construction of new knowledge is central to a person's development. This entails a shift to learning activities that are more *meaningful* to the learner, i.e. related to his or her own personal experience and needs. Awareness of the learning process is a prerequisite for successful learning. Also, if materials and classrooms are considered to be entities separate from personal experience and the immediate application of what is learned, they will not have an influence on overall personal constructs. Individuals must be able to construct their own private learning spaces according to their needs and fill them with personally meaningful learning material. Also Bruner (1966) incorporated knowledge in a personal framework, stating that knowing and thinking develop with experiences, placing emphasis on the individual as a self-realising being, and stressing the importance of self-concept and affective factors in learning.

Another well-known humanist is Abraham Maslow. His concept of self-actualisation has been highly influential. In it he suggests that motivation is tied to human needs that are arranged in a hierarchy at the bottom of which come psychological needs such as sleep and food. When these are satisfied, social needs such as belonging and love can arise. These lead to the need for self-esteem. These are called deficiency motives, as they can hinder the fulfilment of higher-order motives such as a need for knowledge, understanding and ultimately self-actualisation, the need to develop oneself as a true person. This was held to be true for all human beings and in the true spirit of the time, he exuberantly claimed :

> 'Observe that if these assumptions are proven true, they promise a scientific ethics, a natural value system, a court of ultimate appeal for the determination of good and bad, of right and wrong.' (Maslow 1968, p.4)

Although his theory has been criticised for its (American) cultural particularism, it has nonetheless had a considerable influence on educational theory, in that it stressed the importance of an individual's wish to develop as a person (to actualise oneself), and that this desire is a tremendous source of motivation and therefore more important than objective knowledge.

Carl Rogers also regarded the tendency of human beings to fulfil or actualise all of their capacities as the main motivation for growth. It is the learner who learns and not the teacher who teaches. The teacher facilitates learning in learners, and the quality of this interaction is largely based on the relationship between them, where trust and empathy make learning experiences more pervasive and therefore make a difference to the behaviour of the learner. For the same reason, it is ultimately the learner who is the only person able to evaluate progress (Rogers 1969).

The work of Stevick (1980) relates to this in that it sees as a critical task for the teacher the enhancement of this process of self-fulfillment and therefore the facilitatation of learning. A genuine interest in the student, his or her work and personal experience are a prerequisite for success. Stevick further writes about the need to strike a balance between control and initiative. The teacher acts as an expert on the subject matter, for example making comparisons with the learner's linguistic production and that of a native speaker, or that of a learner and his previous production. The amount of control or initiative is flexible.

Self-fulfillment and personal growth are strongly influenced by affective factors such as motivation and courage. Research in this field has influenced language teaching methodologies and several teaching methods have arisen from it, such as Suggestopedia (Lozanov 1978) and the Silent Way (Gattegno 1963). More importantly perhaps, these insights have had a considerable influence over all teaching methodologies. Significant changes in types of teaching materials, curricula, types of teacher-learner interaction etcetera stem from them.

More recent educational theories incorporate the affective factor in their definitions. Novak & Gowin (1984) for example distinguish between *training programs*, that focus on the teaching of behaviours and *educational programs* :

> '...*educational* programs should provide learners with the basis for understanding why and how new knowledge is related to what they already know and give them the affective assurance that they have the capability to use this new knowledge in new contexts.' (p. xi)

These theories influenced educational practice in the form of the humanistic curriculum. It emphasised the development of the whole person. As Dubin & Olshtain (1986) summarise it :

> 'In concrete terms, the humanistic curriculum puts high value on people accepting responsibility for their own learning, making decisions for themselves, choosing and initiating activities, expressing feelings and opinions about needs, abilities, and preferences.' (p. 75)

According to them the humanistic curriculum has the following goals and characteristics :

- emphasis on meaningful communication
- the learner is the focal point
- learning is a self-realisation experience in which the learner has considerable say in the decision-making process
- the teacher is a facilitator
- the first language of the learner is seen as an aid for understanding the target language (p.76)

These goals are largely adhered to in the literature on learner autonomy.

1.6 Cognitive psychology

Many developments in cognitive psychology have had a strong influence on ideas about language teaching and learning. The development of learner autonomy gains support from the notion that knowing and thinking develop with experiences. These ideas were put forward a long time ago by philosophers such as Rousseau and Dewey. For Rousseau, the autonomy of the child is central, his character the starting point for his development (Rousseau 1966). In Rousseau's book 'Emile' the child learns through experience with nature, things and finally people, in a serial process. Language takes a central place in this process as it is a sign of understanding. A later influence is Dewey (1942), for whom this process is simultaneous. Personal growth happens *within* a social context. For him the central feature in growth is mastery of the tools of learning, facilitated by problematic situations that arouse motivation, i.e. learning by doing. Huttunenen (1986, p.19) says that for Dewey,

> '...the teacher's task is to guide the student in this development of the logical, psychological and ethical aspects of personal progress towards autonomy. His task is to find ways of enriching, balancing and clarifying the student's experience, to guide him to seek new experiences to structure and simplify experiences when needed, and to find ways of connecting the student's experiences with the diverse ways of life in his culture, including its heritage.'

These experiences are incorporated in and help to build schemes of the world. These schemes then influence focus of attention, choice of what information to 'take in' etc. Basing herself on the writings of Neisser (1976), Huttunen (1986, p.35) summarises:

> '...new material, brought into his possession through active involvement, again moulds and changes the structure of his knowledge and his modes of activity.'

This process determines the *meaningfulness* of new knowledge. If learning is not perceived by a learner to be meaningful, it is less likely to be incorporated into internal schemes. It might be learned and remembered, but not become part of a learner's internal representation of the world. In this context, Marton (Marton, Hounsell &Entwistle 1984) and Rivers (1983) talk about the distinction between 'school knowledge' and 'action knowledge', where the latter becomes more internalised and can therefore also be applied outside the school (or any other environment). This type of learning is related to autonomous learning, since no teacher can make the link to internal schemes. Ultimately, this is perhaps where real autonomy lies. Learners have to work actively with these internal schemes. They need to compare new information with existing knowledge, look for similarities, organise new knowledge logically etc. We touch here upon a distinction made between *active* and *proactive* learners (Knowles 1975). In short, active learners take responsibility for this process whereas proactive learners wait for external stimuli and help. In relation to learner autonomy, Dickinson says (1995, p. 14)

> '...there is convincing evidence that people who take the initative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners)...They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation.'

These findings have influenced several methodologies. The project-syllabus (Legutke en Thomas 1991) tries to involve learners more actively in the learning process. This is also the underlying idea of the process syllabus (Breen 1987). The learner-centred approach, (more influenced by humanistic psychology than cognitive psychology) gives learners a central place in education. Nunan (1995, p. 134, see also 1988) defines learner-centredness :

> '...the key difference is that in a learner-centred curriculum, key decisions about what will be taught, how it will be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed will be made with reference to the learner.'

Cognitive psychology also makes a distinction between field dependence and field independence (Witkin 1949). Field dependent learners are said to be found in more highly regulated and well defined settings

whereas field independent learners are found in more open, democratic societies that stimulate self-regulation and autonomy. For long it has been thought that field independent learners were 'better' learners, who had a higher capacity for autonomous learning. Brookfield (1986) points out, however, that these conclusions are spurious. First, they are strongly culturally bound ; western societies emphasising field independent learning. Secondly, Thiel (1984), using Brookfield's criteria for self-directed learning (1981), found that highly self-directed adult learners have strong field dependent characteristics. There does not seem to be a direct relationship between field independence and autonomy.

These distinctions between active and proactive, field dependent and independent learners, are examples of different learning styles. It was found that different learners learn in different ways. Learning styles are the way learners gather, process, analyse and store information (Kolb 1984, cited in Skehan 1998). Willing (1988) defines it as 'cognitive, affective and psychological behaviours that indicate learners' characteristic and consistent way of perceiving, interacting with and responding to the learning environment.' Good language learners seem to use different ways of doing this and therefore show a large range of behaviours. It is therefore not possible to identify one learning style that works better than others. An interesting finding by Gremmo and Riley (1995) shows that certain methodologies favour certain types of learners. This could be an argument for greater learner-centredness in language teaching.

The study of learning styles has caused an interest in identifying characteristics of 'the good language learner' (Rubin 1975 , Naiman et al 1978). Good learners seem to have many different, sometimes contradictory characteristics. It is hard to define what a good language learner is, but it is possible to identify characteristics of good language learning. Good language learners can be for example elderly people whose memory is not very good, but who know very well how to deal with this by using compensatory strategies. What is interesting to our discussion is that good language learners are probably autonomous learners (or perhaps autonomous learners are good learners) (Wenden 1991). They participate actively in the learning process (Wesche 1979), they are good self-assessors (Hagen, Barclay & Newman1982), good monitors (Weinstein & Rogers 1985) etc.

Attempts have been made to identify strategies that good language learners use. However, it was found that they do not necessarily use better strategies, but use a larger number, know how to choose the right one at the right time and know how to use it well (Ellis 1994). We touch here upon the distinction between cognitive and metacognitive strategies, for obviously our effective deployment of strategies requires knowledge of these strategies, the task we are working on and a whole range of other factors. Wenden's definition of learner strategies (1991, p.19) refers to this : 'learning strategies are mental steps or operations that learners use to learn a new language and to regulate their efforts to do so'. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1989) have compiled taxonomies of learner strategies. Cognitive strategies include those that enhance storage, retrieval and comprehension. Metacognitive strategies include planning, monitoring and evaluation (see paragraph 1.7 for more on metacognition). This includes monitoring and evaluation of cognitive strategies used. Indeed, effective learners seem to be aware of the strategies they use and why they use them (Green & Oxford 1995).

Finally, cognitive psychology has stressed the importance of motivation in language learning. Motivation is a tricky concept as there are different kinds. Deci & Ryan (1985) distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is motivation external to a person as for example provdided by an examination one needs to pass in order to be accepted by a university. Intrinsic motivation is internal, i.e. comes from within a person. For example a desire to be part of certain group can be a motivation to learn a language. The distinction is not so clear-cut however (Van Lier, 1996) because one can have to pass an examination to enter university, but at the same wish to learn from it for one's own benefit. Intrinsic motivation is not necessarily better than extrinsic motivation. However, it is more often so. An active participation in the learning process relates learning content to learners' personal goals and is therefore a way to increase intrinsic motivation. Since active participation is a characteristic of learner autonomy, autonomous language learning can be expected to be motivating. Or, conversely, in the words of Ushioda (1996, p.2) 'Autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners.' Autonomous language learners are according to him self-motivators, i.e. : '...self-motivation implies taking charge of the affective dimension of that learning experience.' It is therefore intrinsically related to learner autonomy (see paragraph). Later Ushioda says (p.39) : 'It is a capacity for maintaining positive belief structures and self-

perceptions, mediating the subjective impact of negative experiences, and generating success and positive outcomes.'

It is clear that different strands of research in cognitive psychology have contributed to a justification for the development of learner autonomy. A number of these theories have also been directly applied to classroom practice.

1.7 Metacognition

In our discussion of cognitive psychology, we have already touched upon the subject of metacognition several times. Metacognition is our knowledge of cognitive processes. Flavell (1970) was the first to coin the term and referred to it as our awareness of the learning process. Later (1976) he says : 'Metacognition refers, among other things, to the active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which they bear, usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective' (p.231). Flavell sees different kinds of metacognition; beliefs about universal truths and self-concept, called person knowledge; knowledge of the general process and nature of language learning, i.e. task knowledge; and our perceptions of the use and usefulness of certain strategies, strategic knowledge (Flavell 1979).

Also according to Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser (1998), metacognitive awareness consists of three parts: thinking of what one knows (metacognitive knowledge), thinking of what one is currently doing (metacognitive skill) and thinking of what one's current cognitive or affective state is (metacognitive experience). What is important, is that all this knowledge, the beliefs and perceptions are related to learner autonomy, in that they are needed to make informed decisions about one's learning. If it is the aim of education to let learners take charge of their own learning (for whichever of the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs), then they need to be able to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. And in order to do so, they need to be metacognitively aware. As O'Malley (O'Malley et al 1985) summarise it:

> 'Students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction and ability to review their progress, accomplishments and future learning directions.' (p.24)

Measuring students' metacognitive awareness potentially could tell us how autonomous these students are. Sinclair (1999) devised a qualitative assessment instrument to assess learners' metacognitive awareness, which we will describe in paragraph 3.3. There we will also describe Lai's (forthcoming) assessment scales for learner autonomy. These include elements that assess learners' metacognitive awareness.

There are, however, different opinions as to whether or not metacognitive awareness can be measured. Some say that certain processes can become automatised and are therefore no longer conscious. According to Flavell (1979) metacognitive knowledge is statable, available to awareness: '...which can be activated as a result of a deliberate, conscious memory search, or unintentionally, by retrieval cues in the task situation' (p.907). Others do not concur. Schmitt and Newby (1981, cited in Victori, unpublished paper (1999), p.6) say:

> 'On the other hand, when you can achieve your goals without effort, i.e. when the task is easy and known, or when you are an expert learner, metacognitive knowledge may remain inaccessbile to conscious awareness, due to the resulting automaticity of the cognitive skill.'

There are, however, different levels of metacognitive processing. Kluwe (1982, described in Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser 1998), for example distinguishes between executive monitoring processes, that are directed at the acquisition of information about the person's thinking processes, and executive regulation processes that are directed at the regulation of the course of one's own thinking. The first of these comprises different elements: decisions that help to identify the task, to check current progress of that work, to evaluate that progress and to predict what the outcome will be. The second of these comprises decisions that help to allocate his or her resources to the current task, determine the order of steps to be

taken to complete the task, to set the intensity or the speed at which one should work at the task. It is possible that some of these processes, especially those in the second set, become automatised, or at least unavailable to awareness more easily than others.

The relationship between metacognitve awareness and learning gains has yet to be explored. One of the few examples is a study conducted by Jones et al. (1987, cited in Sinclair 1999) who found that metacognitive awareness was related to success in language learning in that effective learners were aware of the processes underlying their own learning processes and attempted to use appropriate strategies to manage their own learning. However, the relationship is as yet unclear and depends on many factors. Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser (1998, p.10) summarise :

'Whether people can monitor and regulate their thinking, how and when they monitor and regulate, and whether greater chances for success are realised through monitoring and regulating depends on the task, the demands posed by the task, people's knowledge of the task, and the kinds of cognitive strategies they can bring to bear on the task. However, equally important is how people assess themselves as self-regulatory organisms, as 'agents of their own thinking.' (Kluwe, 1982, p.222)

The bottom line is that metacognitive awareness is an important element in learning and crucial to the development of learner autonomy (Wilkins 1996, Wenden 1999). Little (1997, p.36) cites Chaney (1992) who has shown that metalinguistic awareness can be detected in children as young as three years old. Its development is boosted by learning to read and write, requiring children to learn to focus, analyze and in the case of writing, to plan, revise etc. In the words of Little (1997, p. 37) : 'Clearly, the development of explicit metalinguistic awareness is fundamental to our capacity for autonomy as language users'.

1.8 Consciousness

Intrinsically related to the previous discussion about the possibility of measuring metacognitive awareness, and even more controversial, is the debate about the role of consciousness in language learning. It is also related to learner autonomy, as autonomous learning requires metacognitive awareness and awareness is a form of consciousness. Schmidt (1995) provides an overview of what is known about consciousness in language learning. He identifies four different types of consciousness:

1. consciousness as intention: is learning on purpose, intentional versus incidental
2. consciousness as attention: noticing and focusing
3. consciousness as awareness: having knowledge of learning
4. consciousness as control : automatised performance of tasks

Van Lier (1996) gives a useful analogy to clarify the differences between these different types of consciousness ; the unconscious person is in a coma, the unaware goes through life in a daze, and the inattentive person will sooner or later get run over by a car. Schmidt says that people need not be aware of learning, but they need to notice things in order to learn them (cf. Trabasso & Bower 1968). The distinction is particularly relevant to the discussion about the language acquisition / language learning controversy. The proponents of the language acquisition theory (the most famous of these being undoubtedly Krashen, 1982, 1985) claim that learning takes place unconsciously. As there are different levels of consciousness, Schmidt (1991, 1995) argues for example that learning can take place unintentionally, but that this doesn't mean that learning takes place unconsciously in any other sense. Computer simulations have shown that programmes based on frequency counting outperform others based on abstract rule-forming. Since computers are not conscious, that means that implicit learning probably works like this. However, for complex learning to take place, a form of consciousness seems to be necessary. Schmidt (1995) summarises:

> 'Attention is required for all learning...I have also argued that detection (in the information processing sense), subjective awareness at the level of noticing, and learning all coincide. Learning at the higher level of understanding also seems crucial in most cases, and where generalisation without awareness does seem to take place this is accomplished through simple

associative learning applied to a rich memory base, rather than the unconscious induction of abstract rules.' (p.45)

He concludes by giving learners advice on how to learn, telling them to pay attention to input, to compare between native speakers' language and their own and build hypotheses on this. He finishes with 'nothing comes for free', which is what is relevant to our discussion on learner autonomy. Research on the 'good language learner' has found that learners who are more active participants in the learning process generally outperform those who are less active. Research on strategy use has found that better learners use more strategies and that they use them in a more flexible way. Linking this to the study of consciousness in learning, it seems that a deliberate, or at least an attentive conscious effort has to be made for learners to learn the most. This is probably also where motivation plays a role. Motivation makes us more active, makes us want things and do our best to achieve them. Paying attention, comparing, building hypotheses, are all characteristics of the autonomous language learner. The more autonomous language learner is, in short, more consciously involved.

1.9 Conclusion

All the disciplines discussed above influenced thinking about language teaching and learning and especially about the role of the language learner in the process. The process syllabus (Breen & Candlin 1987), the learner-centred approach (Nunan 1988) and many other approaches and methodologies are a result of this, but more importantly the language learner now occupies a more central place in the classroom. At the same time a deliberate attempt is being made to make learners more responsible for their own learning. This interest in the development of learner autonomy was not set in a theoretical framework until the late 1970's, when all these ideas found a synthesis in the ideas put forward by Holec (1981). He defined learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (p.3). This ability has 'a potential capacity to act in a given situation – in our case learning – and not the actual behaviour of an individual in that situation' (p.3). The actual behaviour is autodidaxy. So for Holec learner autonomy is an ability, not an action. Some authors concur, such as Little (1991, p.4) who defines it as 'a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action.' To him there is a certain amount of awareness ('critical reflection') involved. Also to Nunan (1995, p.145) the ability is crucial : 'learners who have reached a point where they are able to define their own goals and create their own learning opportunities have, by defnintion, become autonomous.' To others, different elements play a role. For Huttunen (1986, p.95) the act of a certain type of learning is important: 'A learner is fully autonomous when he is working individually or in a group, taking responsibility for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of his studies...'

If we look at the discussed definitions, we find that they either focus on autonomy as an ability or as a certain act of learning. These definitions seem to be incomplete. To have an ability to do something but not do it would hardly be useful. For example, a student can have the ability to take charge of his or her learning but still decide to be highly teacher-dependent and take no initiative whatsoever. And this is often the case, perhaps because it is less energy-consuming (sometimes, however, it could simply be the most efficient strategy). On the other hand, if autonomy is defined as a student taking responsibility without having the ability to do so, then for example any blind act of randomly choosing materials from a library shelf would be the ultimate autonomous deed.

Consciousness seems to be an important part of the process. This involves consciousness of making choices about what to learn, how to learn it, consciousness of progress etc. It could be argued that 'being able' means that one has the capability to do these things and is therefore conscious. One cannot make informed choices about what to learn or select appropriate strategies without being conscious of it. The problem, I think, lies in the words 'informed' and 'appropriate'. Poor language learners also use learning strategies, but often not the most efficient ones, or they don't use them in an efficient manner. They may also make choices about what to learn when forced to do so, but these choices are not likely to be the best ones. They are not conscious of some aspects of their way of learning, or their current knowledge, or of different learning strategies. Lai (forthcoming) talks about this when she makes the distinction between learners' conceptual understanding (metacognitive awareness) of various aspects of self-directed

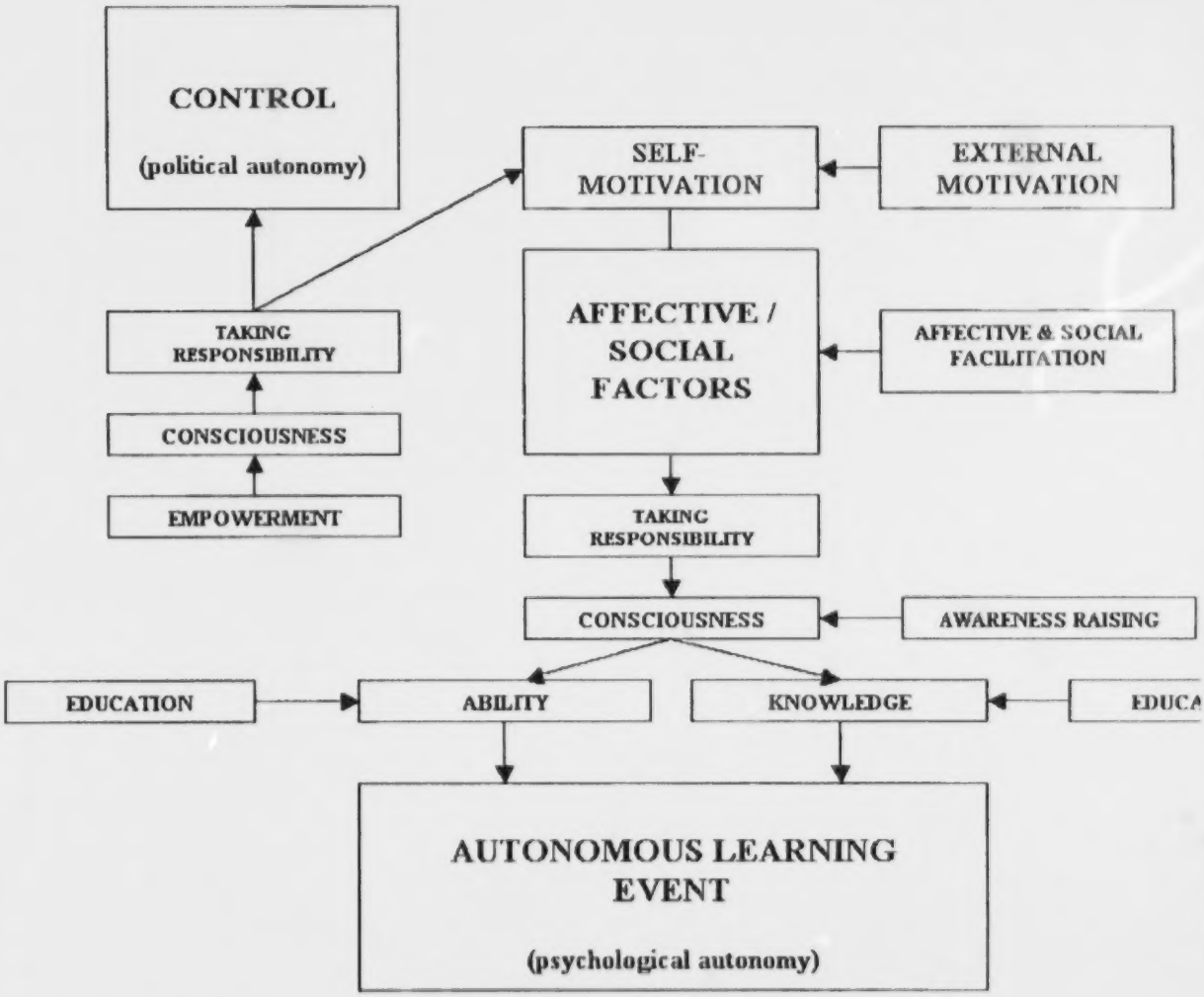
language learning, and their actual ability (methodological techniques) in planning for this kind of learning. The conceptual understanding is important. Brookfield (1985, p.29) says :

> 'It may be possible to be a superb technician of self-directed learning in terms of one's command of goal setting, instructional design or evaluative procedures, and yet to exercise no critical questioning of the validity or worth of one's intellectual pursuit as compared with competing, alternative possiblities.'

Chené (1983, p.42, cited in Brookfield 1986, p.57) puts it simply : 'to be resourceful and to be independent do not equal the achievement of autonomy.' Candy (1991) refers to this as the distinction between situational and epistemological autonomy. Clearly, there is more to autonomous language learning than just a capability.

It could be said, that the perfect language learner (who, of course, does not exist), is *at least* completely conscious of his or her learning, and all aspects related to this. He or she than has the *potential* to use all the resources he or she has. Affective and social filters will influence his or her performance, but he or she is ready to use all his or her capabilities to the fullest (Willis 1999, private communication). The perfect language learner, then, would not be the one who is the quickest, or the most accurate, but is the one who uses all of his or her capacities in the most efficient way. The fully autonomous language learner is the one who develops him or herself to the fullest. It is an idealistic concept then, which refers to psychological autonomy. As mentioned before, some say that certain processes can become automatised (like some metacognitive processes) and that therefore we are not conscious of them anymore. However, there is as yet no convincing evidence for this (see paragraph 1.7 on metacogntion and paragraph 1.8 on consciousness). Therefore, a definition of learner autonomy should include consciousness. The affective factors mentioned before include motivation. As discussed above (paragraph 1.9), motivation is related to autonomy in two ways. First, autonomous learning is (or needs) intrinsically motivated learning and secondly, it is to a large extent dependent on self-motivation, the 'affective dimension of the learning experience' (Ushioda 1996). Learners need to be aware of its importance and take reponsiblity for it.

There is, however, also a political aspect to autonomy. It is this aspect, I believe, to which Holec's definition mainly refers. It is the ability to create the *possibiilty* of learning when and where and what one wants to learn. It has to do with control, and that is a political concept. However, political autonomy comes before psychological autonomy, because political autonomy allows students to use (and develop) their psychological autonomy. Also in that sense consciousness plays a role, for political autonomy requires consciousness of the society we live in and of ourselves and our role in that society. The following diagram presents all the factors that influence the occurrence of an autonomous act of learning.



On the left hand side we find Control. This refers to the politcal aspect of autonomy. Learners have to have the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning. However, this is not enough. They need to be aware of this and need to actively take responsibility for creating the opportunities that allow them to learn as they see fit. Empowerment is the job of society and its educators. If, and only if this condition is met, the right-hand section applies. Learners need motivation to learn. 'Self-motivation' refers to the process whereby learners are aware of the need to, and do, take responsibility for this affective element in learning. Of course, learners can also be motivated by factors that initially lie outside them, in which case there is no need for active self-motivation (although it could perhaps be argued that all motivation, also external, needs to be internalised to some extent and that this process is a form of self-motivation). Some forms of learning take place without motivation of any kind. However this does not apply to autonomous learning.

Other affective (stress, anxiety) and social (appropriateness of different forms of learning at different times, under different circumstances) factors influence what kind of learning, if any, will happen. Classrooms need to remove social and affective barriers. If the learner has the opportunity (political

aspect), is motivated and if no other affective, or social factors prohibit learning from taking place, then (s)he can actually engage in the *act* of learning. In this (s)he needs to be conscious as argued above. Awareness raising, for example as part of a course, facilitates this aspect. Learners need to have knowledge of their state of mind, the task, the goals etc. Also they need skills (the ability) to plan, monitor and evaluate based on this. Education should develop or enhance the necessary knowledge and skills. It is only if all these conditions are met, that we can speak of an act of autonomous learning. As a working definition we formulate the following :

Autonomous language learing is an act of learning whereby motivated learners consciously make informed decisions about that learning.

It is important to note that it is not possible or necessary during all acts of learning to be able or willing to consciously make decisions. Different learning situations pose different demands. Autonomy is not an either / or concept, but has to be seen as a continuum. One can be more or less autonomous and be so in different learning situations. It fluctuates over time, between skills and within skills. It is difficult to attain and is not necessarily permanent (once acquired it is not necessarily retained).

Benson (1997, p.1-2) notes that the term learner autonomy can have at least five different connotations :

a. for situations in which learners study entirely on their own
b. for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning
c. for an inborn capacity which isuppressed by insititutional education
d. for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning
e. for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning'

We often come across the term self-direction. It is a type of learning whereby the learner takes responsibility for the decisions about what, when and where to learn (Dickinson 1987). However, this could be done without being conscious of it. Others do see self-directed learning as a conscious form of learning, thereby equating it with what we refer to as autonomous learning (Collins & Hammond 1991). In our definition, autonomous learners are self-directed, but self-directed learners are not necessarily autonomous. There is a distinction (that is actually a continuum) between learner-based self-direction and materials-based self-direction. In a materials-based self-directed situation, the directive, pedagogic element (the 'teacher' if you will) is in the learning material. Self-instruction refers to the situation in which learners learn by themselves, with or without having selected materials themselves, with or without being conscious of it. Learner independence is a fairly neutral term that in different contexts can mean any of the above. It is often used as a synonym for learner autonomy.

Learning alone is often seen as a necessary element of autonomous learning. However, as Holec (1981) notes, individualisation (in the sense of learning alone) is not autonomy for one has to make a distinction between a *mode* of learning (without a teacher) and an *orientation* towards learning (taking responsibility, being conscious of the process). To others individualisation refers to a student's progressing through a curriculum at his or her own pace. However, as Dickinson (1976) says, this is not the central aspect of autonomy, but merely a necessary condition for it. Others pointed out (cf. Broady & Kenning 1996) that the shift to individualisation which can be seen in many classrooms around the world nowadays, negates the social aspect of autonomy. Autonomy is a social construct that includes the ability to function effectively as a cooperative member in a group. Learning takes place in a social context and it is this context that learners have to be aware of and assume a role in. Little (1991, p.5) says about this: 'Because we are social beings our independence is always balanced by dependence; our essential condition is one of interdependence. Total detachment is a principal determining feature not of autonomy but of autism...'. Boud (1981) cites Chickering (1969), who says : 'Simultaneously, the individual must accept interdependence, recognising that one cannot receive benefits from a social structure without contributing to it, that personal rights have a corollary social responsibility'.

Just as autonomous learning is not necessarily learning alone, it is not necessarily learning without a teacher. Boud (1981, p.25) says

> 'It is compatible with autonomous learning for learners to opt to be 'taught' in situations in which they have decided that it is desirable for their own ends. Developing autonomy does not simply involve removing structured teaching; it may require a greater degree of structure than didactic teaching, but of a different kind.'

Learners need help to develop their autonomous learning skills. For this and other reasons the need for teachers will not decrease, but their roles, and the role of teaching in the learning process, will change (Abercrombie 1981, Crabbe 1994, Little 1995).

Initially it was thought that autonomy would not work for children. Dam (1982) however, successfully taught primary school students independent learning skills. Other misconceptions were that it would not work for 'difficult' languages or for lower intelligence students (Gremmo & Riley 1995). It was also thought to be incompatible with examination-led curricula (cf. Broady & Kenning 1996) and self-assessment (Gremmo and Riley 1995). However, a considerable body of research has shown that for all these groups learner autonomy is possible.

Finally, it is sometimes noted that the focus nowadays is on the psychological aspect of learner autonomy. Pennycook (1997 ; see also Benson 1996 and Kenny 1993) says only strategies and techniques are taught, without increasing student awareness of political aspects related to education, such as freedom of choice. The Critical Language Awareness movement (Fairclough 1992) tries to incorporate political elements into its curriculum. Gibbs' definition of learner autonomy is an example of some of the strongly political definitions that abound (1979 p.119, cited in Boud 1981, p.22) :

> 'An autonomous individual must have both independence from external authority and mastery of himself and his powers. He must be free from the dictates and interference of other people, and free also from disabling conflicts or lack of coordination between the elements of his own personality. He must have the freedom to act and work as he chooses, and he must be capable of formulating and following a rule, pattern or policy of acting and working.' (p. 119)

When talking about the political aspect of learner autonomy, we very soon touch upon its relation to culture. For some, learner autonomy is a western construct that cannot be exported to other cultures. Pennycook (1997) writes about the ethnocentric aspect, but adds that,

> 'This is not to say that autonomy as a concept or an educational goal does not exist elsewhere, but rather that a notion of autonomy will be very different in different educational contexts. To encourage 'learner autonomy' universally, without first becoming acutely aware of the social, cultural and political context in which one is working, may lead at best to inappropriate pedagogies and at worst to cultural impositions.' (p.44)

Farmer (1994) tried to incorporate the development of learner autonomy in a university course in Hong Kong. He adapted the concept to the existing cultural context, by emphasising the social aspect in favour of the individual. A strong group-orientation was believed to be a more adequate representation of societal values and ways of working. This approach proved to be successful. Jones (1995) desribes the implementation of SALL in Cambodia. He changed the setup of the university SAC to accommodate learning and interaction styles prevalent in Cambodian society. He did not experience any resistence to this kind of working. Aoki & Smith (1999, see also Aoki 1994) also have shown the viability of the concept in Japan, emphasising that it is the form of the integration within the cultural context that determines its success or failure. Cultures, they stress, are neither static nor uniform and change is very well possible, and often desirable. There does not seem to be a direct correlation between learning style and ethnicity (see also Horwitz 1999). On a more philosophical level, Little (1999) has argued that autonomy is a human characteristic that has two components, a social and a cognitive. The cognitive component is universal and allows the concept to be used in different contexts.

The promotion of learner autonomy does entail one major problem. If learner autonomy stands for freedom, then how can we induce, direct, force learners to adopt it ? Little (1975, p.260) summarises :

> 'There is no escape from the paradox of leadership – the requirement that men should be *led* to freedom, that students be taught the autonomous style.'

Sheerin (1991) makes a distinction between training, which is formal education, and development, something the learner does by him or herself. Therefore :

> '... in the final analysis the learner will embrace what he perceives as useful and it is important that we approach learner training as a tool rather than as a moral imperative, and that we regard autonomy as a means to an end (learning) rather than as an end in itself.' (p.151)

Others might not concur, for this seems to dismiss the political aspect of autonomy. However it is probably a very pragmatic approach. The forms this 'tool' takes are very diverse. There is now a considerable amount of literature assisting teachers in the implementation of 'learner training' (eg. Ellis & Sinclair 1989, Dickinson 1987, Wenden and Rubin 1987, O'Malley and Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990 and Wenden 1991, Gardner & Miller 1996, Lockwood 1998) or assisting leaners in developing learning skills by themselves (Pimsleur 1980, Ellis & Sinclair 1989, Willing 1989, Gibbons 1991, Rubin & Thompson 1994, Lewis 1999). Most of these focus on the teaching of learning strategies. Victori & Lockhart (1995) see this as a problem, for according to them this leaves out reflection on attitudes towards learning and autonomy as well as personal needs, learning styles and self-evaluation. They note that when strategies are taught, this is often without a rationale as to why this should be of benefit.

Advances in general educational theories and their practical applications can be useful in the promotion of learner autonomy. Novak and Gowin (1984) for example present a theory that is interesting for it sees metaknowledge and metalearning as important components of meaningful learning (cf. Ausubel 1963). They introduce two tools that help students in developing knowledge of these aspects of learning, namely concept mapping (a way to help students and educators see the meanings of learning materials) and Vee heuristics (a way to help students and educators penetrate the structure and meaning of the knowledge they seek to understand). Although their theory does not seek to directly promote learner autonomy, it does enhance its development and offers teachers a practical instrument to make learners more aware of their learning.

Other methods used to promote learner autonomy are the provision of courses in independent learning (Helmore 1985, Ma 1994 for a description of a 7-day course in Hong Kong) and courses that are largely self-directed (such as some distance learning courses : White 1999) although some of these *require* learner autonomy rather than develop it. Another method used to promote learner autonomy, and the focus of this study, is the provision of Self-Access Centres. We will describe this below.

Chapter 2 : SACs and SALL and their relationship with Learner Autonomy

2.1 Definitions and the relationship with learner autonomy

We will now continue by reviewing the literature on Self-Access Language Learning (SALL) and Self-Access Centres. Before we proceed to describe these terms, let us take a look at their origins.

In the 1950's and 1960's a large number of so-called language laboratories were set up, where learners could work on drill-and-practice exercises. These laboratories usually provided audio and videotapes alongside printed materials. They were a practical offshoot of behaviouristic theories on language learning. As described above (paragraph 1.5), behaviourism was gradually replaced by other theories. Likewise, the function of language laboratories changed. However, initially, many of its resources were still used. Gremmo & Riley (1995, p.156), who talk about 'libraries' instead of SACs, say about this :

> 'Although the differences in term of physical lay-out and equipment were minimal, the psychological and educational bases of 'labs' and 'libraries' coud hardly have been more different,

as labs were associated with a behaviouristic, lock-step approach whereas libraries were a manifestation - however limited to start with - of the ideas of 'autonomous' and 'self-directed' learning.'

So SACs were a means of promoting learner autonomy, not just to improve learners' linguistics skills. In fact, Benson & Voller (1997, p.15) say :

> 'Self-Access resource centres are *the most typical means* (my emphasis) by which institutions have attempted to implement notions of autonomy and independence over the last twenty years to the extent that 'self-access language learning' is now often used as a synonym for 'autonomous language learning.'

So, there seems to be a difference between the two. Autonomous language learning would be the kind of learning an autonomous learner engages in. He or she would consciously make well informed decisions about his or her learning. Self-access language learning, however, is the kind of learning that takes place in a SAC. Although the aim of this kind of learning is to make learners more autonomous, this is not always the case. There does not seem to be a direct relationship. For example, although students may work by themselves in a SAC, they could still work on things their teachers had told them to do. Sheerin (1994, p. 144, see also 1997) says:

> ' A self-access centre could be used as a teacher-directed source of individualised homework activities, but this would in no way constitute self-directed learning.'

It is important here to note the difference here between Self-Access Learning and self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is learner-initiated, i.e. whereby the decision to study lies with the learner. SALL does not have to be self-directed. Benson (1998) summarises this by saying that if autonomy is the aim, then self-direction is a means to this end, and self-access is an environment within which it can be achieved. Some warn of the potential negative side-effects of SALL :

> 'SALL can easily lead to dependence on a narrow range of strategies and materials and a narrowing of perspectives ... there is no necessary link between learning a language in a self-access facility and the development of autonomy and independence'. (Benson & Voller 1997, p.6)

Materials in themselves can be an obstacle to the development of learner autonomy as Gremmo & Riley (1995) say:

> 'Systems which offer only pedagogical materials cannot really be called 'self-directed' as they do not in fact allow learners to use the selection criteria which they developed in counselling and training sessions to build up their personal work programmes'. (p. 160)

Therefore, there is no direct link between SALL and learner autonomy. Benson & Voller (1997) claim:

> 'Yet there is very little evidence that self-instructional modes of learning are in themselves sufficient to lead to greater autonomy or independence. On the contrary, it appears that learners who are forced into self-instructional modes of learning without adequate support will tend to rely all the more on the directive elements in the materials they use. (p.9)

So learners need to be equipped with a number of skills before they can benefit from working in a SAC. Cousin (1985, paragraph 9, cited in Dickinson 1987, p. 116) summarises some of these necessary skills:

> 'They must be accustomed to finding their way around a resource, which may require familiarity with the use of a public library, for instance. They must obviously be sufficiently fluent readers to be able to make use of a considerable amount of written instructions and must have the self discipline and habits of study to be able to concentrate on an academic task without outside supervision. It seems unlikely that this is to be achieved without experience of formal education.'

In a second language environment, the aspect of language becomes very important. Instructions, signs etc need to be simple and clear. However, learners also need psychological preparation. Learners come to a course for example with certain expectations about what type of tuition they will get, and that includes expectations about the amount of formal teaching they will receive. If a significant amount of time is allocated to SALL, then an understanding of its principles and aims will be necessary. Furthermore, learners need to develop skills that allow them to make choices about what to learn, when to learn and how to learn it, as well as to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes. Although learning in a SAC is one of the ways to develop these skills, learners need to be made aware of them and perhaps need some sort of formal introduction to them (Victori & Lockhart 1995). So, SALL is not the same as autonomous language learning (see also Sturtridge 1997) and does not necessarily lead to it. Furthermore, when learners are not prepared for it, it can be counterproductive. So why do we want SALL ? Little (1989) provides a concise rationale for the use of SACs:

> 'If...successful language learning depends on interaction with a large and varied diet of textual materials and the development within the learner of a capacity to take decisive intiatives, then we must provide the learner with resources that he or she can draw on *as an individual*. According to this view all language learning turns out to have a self-instructional component and the self-access system is seen not as an alternative to the teacher but as a necessary resource for all language learners.' (p. 32)

SACs can give learners the opportunity to learn by themselves, and to make their own decisions about their learning (although this does not have to be the case). However, some claim that SACs can fulfil another role. Crabbe (1993) says that 'Autonomous learning needs to become a reference point for *all* classroom procedure' (p.144). In order to facilitate this, he claims that there must be a 'bridge' between 'public domain' learning (that is, learning which is based on shared classroom activities) and 'private domain' learning (that is, personal individual learning behaviour). SALL learning could be said to belong to both the public and private domains. An important idea is the aim of 'bridging' the two learning domains. Gardner and Miller (1999, p. 22) also discuss the notion of the SAC acting as a 'bridge to the outside, unstructured environment' in native speaker environments. They consider the potential for this bridge 'function' having either positive or negative effects on learning. The negative effects they consider include, for example, the possibility that learners may prefer using the SAC over interacting in the more demanding English-speaking environment around them. Positive effects could be that learners can build up their confidence in the SAC before trying the real world and it is possible to blur the lines between a SAC and the real world by inviting the real world in and sending the learners out. The SAC can also protect lower level students from the real world until they are ready for it.

Ideally, learners should be prepared for SALL, or the SAC should help them in acquiring the skills necessary to do so, either by having someone provide instruction or by using pathways or interactive catalogues, that enable users to select appropriate materials. Information about how to use the resources should be provided. Ideally, users should be made aware of this process of selection and evaluating, to develop their ability to learn independently. There are, however, other advantages to working in a SAC. Sometimes there are no other options, either because there are no courses available, or because the student does not have the time or money to do an official course. Also, having a SAC provides a teacher with the possibility to send students off to do remedial study, if they are behind the rest of the class, or to send a whole class there, so that he or she has time to work with one or two learners who need extra help. Some see economic reasons for institutions to have a SAC : '...such centres can also be seen as providing language learning on the cheap, potentially substituting for direct teaching operations...' (Aston 1996, p.283). Others do not agree with this view. Gardner & Miller (1997, p.32) warn :

> 'Implementing SALL should not be seen as a cheap alternative to teaching. It should be seen as a useful complement to teaching which enhances language-learning opportunities and provides learners with the independent learning skills to continue learning languages afther they have finished formal studies. In this light it may be judged to be relatively cost efficient.'

Therefore, the cost-saving aspect will probably not be very high. In fact, SACs are quite expensive resources. They need materials, equipment (often including expensive computers), staff, maintenance etc.

Because of the many aspects related to SACs, some defnitions have a rather neutral ring to them. McCafferty, for example, describes it as a place that offers access to materials, activities and help (McCafferty 1982, cited in Dickinson 1987, p. 107). Riley (1989) says:

> 'A SAC is a 'system' of learning where different learners, working on different activities, enjoy different degrees of self-direction within a particular and unique institutional context.'

Gardner & Miller's (1997, p.xvii) definition of SALL seems to be more idealistic than realistic :

> 'Self-access language learning (SALL) is learning in which students take more responsibility for their learning than in teacher directed settings...Ideally SALL offers varying degrees of guidance but encourages students to move towards autonomy.'

Sheerin's (1991, p.144) definition refers more to the potential of SALL to develop learner independence :

> 'It is a logical development of , and physical manifestation of individualisation and a means of promoting learner autonomy and self-directed learning.'

So SALL can be said to be the learning that takes place in a SAC. It involves the development of learner autonomy and it caters for learners with different needs. We would like to propose the following definition :

Self-Access Language Learning is learning that takes place in a Self-Access Centre. A Self-Access Centre consists of a number of resources (in the form of materials, activities and help), usually in one place, that accommodates learners of different levels, styles, and with different goals and interests. It aims at developing learner autonomy among its users.

The definition reads 'usually in one place', because a SAC does not need to be a separate room. Also, a corner in a classroom can be called a SAC, if it provides these resources for different learners and if it aims to develop learner autonomy. Some of the definitions use the word individualisation. This need not be taken too literally, though. Of course, group work is perfectly possible in a SAC and can be a good example of autonomous learning. In fact, it is a common feature of many SACs. Often a separate room is available for groups to organise more noisy activities. The social aspect of SALL is indeed very important, as is the social aspect of learner autonomy (see paragraph 1.9).

Cotterall (1995a) describes different types of university SACs and in another article (1995b) lists 5 elements that determine their success. They are : learner support, materials, technology, management and research activity. There are many different factors that make up a particular SAC, amongst others its aims and the kind of use that is being made of them. Important questions to ask when reviewing a SAC are for example: is the development of learner autonomy an explicit goal of this SAC ? Are learners obliged to study in the SAC or do they do so of their own free will ? Is the SALL that takes place there an integral part of a course, is it the only mode of learning or is it an extra activity for students in a course?

Whatever the answers to these questions, of main importance are the reasons an institution has for having a SAC in the first place. This will influence the type of learning that takes place in them. If a SAC is set up mainly for economic reasons, the development of independent learning skills, for example, might play a smaller role. Other factors that influence the type of learning in a SAC are learners' cultural and educational backgrounds, their beliefs about SALL, the ways teachers integrate SALL into their teaching etc. All these factors together result in very different learning contexts, and thus different roles for teachers and learners (Little 1995, Cotterall 1998). Gardner & Miller (1997) describe the typology that the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP 1999) has devised. It consists of 6 models of Individual Learning Centres differing in the degree to which they foster learner autonomy. Another typology is by Miller & Rogerson-Revell (1993) who distinguish between menu-driven SACs (where learners have been trained and are capable of using catalogues to plan and implement their learning), supermarkets (offering a wide range of materials), controlled access (where the focus is on homework-based activities) and open-access (where learners must be fairly autonomous). Gardner & Miller (1999) also propose their own typology,

which consists of 15 kinds of Self-Access Centres. Different types have different influences on learners' perceptions and use of the resources available. Paragraph 4.1 gives a description of the English Proficiency Programme and paragraph x of self-access resources at Victoria University Wellington.

Chapter 3 : Previous Research and Research Questions

3.1 Introduction and research foci

With the growth of the number of SACs and an increasing interest in SALL (for an introduction to these terms, see paragraph 2.1), the need for more, and more theoretically sound research increased. Large investments have been made, and are being made in terms of time, energy and money to provide Self-Access resources. These investments need to be justified. Also, the implementation of SALL as part of a curriculum could prove to be highly disruptive to the status quo. Teachers may not like having to change their teaching programme and / or style. If SALL is taken seriously, though, changes will be inevitable. Also parents might, initially at least, be reluctant to, for example, see the amount of teacher-time their children get diminish. The same applies to students, who might not be used to, and not be willing to get used to this kind of learning. Also the management of educational institutions will want to see the benefits of their investments. Therefore, if SALL (and with it the provision of SACs) is to be taken seriously, it needs empirical data to back its claims. It needs to show that it can provide some sort of advantage over other types of learning and / or resources. However, research in this area proved notoriously difficult for several reasons (see Gardner 1999) :

- Complexity: SACs cater for learners of many different backgrounds and with different learning styles. Also the context in which people use them differs among users and over time.
- Uniqueness: there are many factors involved that make up a SAC. Every SAC therefore provides a unique combination of materials, opportunities etc.
- Difficulty of data collection: it is difficult to observe learning events.
- Difficulty of data analysis: it is difficult to separate cause and effect and separate the effects of SALL from other types of learning, and especially to attribute learning specifically to what learners do in a SAC.

About this last point Morrison (1999, p.124) stresses:

> '...this may be due in part to the difficulty of evaluating the success of a centre in terms of learner performance because of the huge number of learner variables that make it impossible to attribute any improvement directly to the use of the SAC.'

Most research therefore focusses on more easily measurable aspects, such as numbers of users, types of materials used etc. In short, it focusses on quantitative, rather than qualitative aspects and on matters relating to *efficiency* rather than *effectiveness*. Gardner (1999) makes this distinction, describing efficiency as the relationship between cost and output and effectiveness as how well pre-set goals are met. An efficient learning environment can house more students, has a lower teacher-student ratio, while maintaining the same quality of education, or can leave teachers time for tasks other than teaching, such as developing materials. Efficiency also has to do with having the right materials. If certain materials are not being used, then this money could be more wisely spent on other resources. Cost-efficiency is one of the reasons many institutions have set up self-access centres. Several authors warn against high expectations as to the money-saving aspect of SACs and claim that at least initially, SACs require large investments and even in the long run, will not diminish the need for teachers. Also, establishing a SAC for these reasons, without understanding its underlying philosophy, would probably be counterproductive (Gremmo & Riley 1995, Sheerin 1994). An evaluation of the cost-efficicency of a SAC would have to take into account the costs of setting it up, of maintaining it, its personnel, the amount of users, and, most importantly, the higher teacher-student ratio (while maintaining of course the same 'quality' of education).

Effectiveness on the other hand has to do with the intrinsic advantages of changes. In the case of a SAC, pre-set goals would of course be that it should make it easier for students to learn, allow them to learn

more, or to learn better. And since SACs are based on the idea of fostering learner autonomy, they should help in the development of autonomy in their users (Star 1994). This is considerably more difficult to measure than numbers of users, use of materials etc. That is one of the reasons, according to Gardner and Miller (1999), that most research on SACs, until now, has focused on efficiency rather than effectiveness.

The research presented here was part of a larger research project, which included an evaluation of the efficiency of the University's Self-Access Centre. The number of users was counted, the type and number of materials used were recorded by the centre's database, questionnaires were used to find out what materials students found to be missing or unhelpful etc. These findings were used to improve the services of the SAC and are presented in a research report (Reinders 2000). If any of this information is relevant to this study, we will refer to it below.

Here, however, we are more concerned with matters of effectiveness. Because of the difficulties mentioned above in gathering empricial data, research in this field relies heavily on students' reports about their learning experiences. It is therefore essential to identify learners' understanding of the learning process and the concepts that are the focus of the study. If there is a mismatch between what the researcher believes (s)he is investigating and what subjects think that is, then the validity of the study is in danger. Futhermore, students' understanding and perceptions are valuable fields of study in their own right. This is perhaps especially true with the concept of learner autonomy (and related to that, SALL), as these are to a large degree subjective and may therefore be imposed on learners. A SAC does not operate in a vacuum. It is embedded in a specific educational setting that influences its 'success'. Learners, the actual users of such resources, define to a large extent what 'success' is in a particular context. It is thus crucial to our understanding of the functioning of a SAC to take learners' experiences and understanding into account.

Lastly, learners' understanding is one of the factors that enhance or hinder an efficient and effective use of a SAC, *as defined by its providers.* If it is believed that certain behaviour has a positive outcome on, say, learning ability, than it is important to identify factors that prohibit this behaviour from taking place. On a more practical level, obstacles and factors that enhance a satisfactory use (as experienced by the students) of the resources are valuable information for those who maintain these resources or who wish to promote their use.

We will therefore focus on the following questions :

- What are students' perceptions of the usefulness of SALL ?
- What do students understand by learner autonomy and SALL ?
- Which factors enhance or inhibit SALL ?

3.2 Previous research

There is little research on (learner perceptions of) the effectiveness of SALL. Some focus on the development of independent learning skills or aspects thereof, others focus on linguistic development and very few focus on both. One of the earlier studies is by Gremmo (1988), who did a study at Crapel at the university of Nancy II. She adminstered a questionnaire to 36 EFL students, who had been working in the univeristy SAC (called 'Systeme d'Apprentissage Autodirige avec Soutien'). Nineteen people responded. The questionnaire contained three open questions about difficulties of working in the SAC, in which areas they felt they had improved most and least (in terms of language acquisition, learning to organise one's learning etc), and finally asking for suggestions to improve the centre. She found that learners were reasonably (but not unanimously) satisfied with their linguistic improvement through working in the SAC, but less so with the development of their independent learning skills. Linguistic improvement is, however, not a characteristic of learning in the SAC. If these students had not studied there, they would probably still have improved their English. In this case it is difficult to atttibute any additional learning gains to working in the SAC.

Star (1994) used two questionnaires to investigate types of learners and learner satisfaction with the orientation programme and usefulness of features of the SAC. Learner training proved a key factor in determining learners' satisfaction with the resources. Over 75% of learners indicated their need for help in checking progress '...knowing how much progress has been made is an important element in independent learning and an essential element of SALL' (p.164).

Farmer (1994) looked at independent learning in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. He used a questionnaire at the end of each visit to the SAC. He surveyed his students to evaluate their study programmes, the teaching / learning approaches, and students' levels of confidence. A questionnaire administered to the students revealed that 68 % of learners felt the study centre had provided practice in areas they felt important, and 31 % of learners reported that they felt better able to work on their own after their twenty hour course in the SAC. 56 % remained neutral. In this study, the SAC was therefore found to be reasonably successful. However, 80 % of the students said it was important to them that there be a teacher present in the SAC.

One of the few evaluations of learners' perceptions of learning gains and their ability to manage learning through SALL, is by Richards (1999). She used a combination of reflection sheets and interviews with five subjects to find out how they rated the usefulness of their SALL. All five rated the contribution of their work in the SAC highly with regard to their linguistic proficiency and their independent learning skills. As Richards indicates though, the students in her study were 'self-selected, motivated and already effective language learners' (p.68). The study showed the importance of support. Richards notes the considerable influence on the subjects' attitudes of their taking part in the study, especially their use of the reflection sheets. Reflection on learning seems to be a crucial element in the success of SALL. The introduction to the resources and the availability of help from the SAC's administrative staff were also identified as important, as was the ability to self-assess.

Gardner & Miller (1997) used questionnaires and interviews to investigate learners' and teachers' perceptions about SALL. They sampled 541 students who had been given training in SALL. This, according to them, may be an important factor as to why students in their study were more positive than those in previous studies ; almost 90 % found the SAC a good place to learn and almost 60 % found it as effective for learning English as classroom lessons. Interestingly, the learners were much more positive than the teachers.

Fernandez-Toro's (1996) study was on self-directed learning. Although this is not exactly the same as SALL (see paragraph 2.1), these kinds of learning do share a number of characteristics, which is why we report on it here. She found that self-instruction seemed to raise proficiency, but ; '...only after a firm classwork grounding- in other words, it appears to 'kick' in at roughly intermediate level, i.e. once the learner is able to cope with real-life texts and interactions' (p. 209) . She found that if it is chosen as the starting method for learning a language, the drop-out rates are high and few learners get beyond beginner levels. However, when self-instruction is based on firm classwork then it appears to take learners further than classwork alone. These findings seem to be in line with what Reeves (1993, cited in Fernandez 1996) found. Self-instruction was more efficient than classroom learning and distance learning, but also had the highest drop-out rates.

Some researchers have focused on measuring (development in) learner autonomy. However, since this is more appropriate to our discussion on learners' understanding of this concept, we will describe these studies below. Others have tried to relate learner autonomy to language acquistion. Dam and Legenhausen (1996) conducted an experiment whereby two EFL classes were compared. One class was taught with the aim of developing learner autonomy, the other was a 'traditional' class. In the former, several alternative ways of teaching and learning were used to make learners more active agents in their own learning process. After one month their increase in vocabulary was tested. The 'autonomous' class was (far) superior to the 'traditional' one. As Dam and Legenhausen point out, this might have been due to the fact that learners were made more aware of the English around them, on TV, in magazines etc and that therefore they learned more words in out-of-class situations.

3.3 What do students understand by learner autonomy and SALL

Teaching learners to become more independent is one thing, how learners experience this and what they think of it, is another. It is largely determined by how they see languages, language learning, learner and teacher roles etc, when they enter a particular educational institution. These beliefs will have an influence on their behaviour and it is therefore important to understand them. Cotterall (1999, p. 496) cites McDonough (1995, p. 9) who says :

> ' ...what we believe we are doing, what we pay attention to, what we think is important, how we choose to behave, how we prefer to solve problems, form the basis of our personal decisions as to how to proceed. An important fact about this argument is that it is not necessary for these kinds of evidence to be true for them to have important consequences for our further development.'

There is now a considerable amount of literature dealing with the topic of learner beliefs (Wenden 1986, Horwitz 1987, Cotterall 1995c, Cotterall 1999, Benson & Lor 1999. In addition, the December 1999 issue of *System* is a special edition on metacognition and learner beliefs). In her 1995 (1995c) article, Cotterall asked learners a large number of questions that she felt were related to readiness for learner autonomy. Factor analysis identified six categories, -'an issue about which one might expect any student to have a more or less coherent set of beliefs' (p.196). They were:

1. the role of the teacher
2. the role of feedback
3. learner independence
4. learner confidence in study ability
5. experience of language learning
6. approach to studying

This does not, of course, mean that the questions relating to these factors actualy measure readiness for learner autonomy. Rather, it shows that they can be grouped in these six categories. But it seems reasonable, also considering previous research on this topic, to assume that to some degree they do. Others have taken a different approach by identifying beliefs from interviews with learners. One of these is Horwitz (1987), who set up a 'Belief About Language Learning Inventory' (BALLI) with beliefs taken from learners from a number of different countries. Later she tried to find beliefs related to culture, but these could not be identified (Horwitz, 1999).

Benson and Lor (1999) claim that beliefs about learning are based on conceptions. Marton's (Marton & Booth 1997) phenomenographical approach aims to describe these conceptions. What is important here, is that there is a difference between conceptions and beliefs, where conceptions are what learners think the object and processes of learning are and beliefs are what the learner holds to be true about these objects and processes. Our conceptions limit our beliefs, which in turn determine our approach. Beliefs about learning and language learning are complex and made up of different elements. Mori (1999) summarises: 'In short, learner beliefs cannot be reduced to a single dimension but are composed of multiple, autonomous dimensions, each of which has unique effects on learning.' (p.382). What is important for our discussion, is that although it is unclear *how* learners' conceptions and beliefs influence behaviour, it is clear that they do, and that therefore, they need to be addressed if any changes in behaviour are to be expected.

Actual descriptions of students' attitudes about learner autonomy and SALL and their promotion *in a particular course,* are scarce. One of them is Gremmo's study (1988) that we discussed above. When asked in which areas students felt they had improved most and least through working in the SAC, none of the students talked about any development in their independent learning skills, mentioning only linguistic improvement or lack thereof. Gremmo notices about this absence:

> '...aucun des dix-neuf apprenants qui ont répondu au questionnaire n'a eu l'impression d'évoluer positivement dans sa compétence d'apprentissage. L'objectif d'autonomisation, qui est inhérent au SAAS, reste-t-il don trop implicitement un domaine du conseil, à tel point que les apprenants ne le prennent que très rarement en compte?' (p.114)

The usefulness of the SAC was rated in terms of linguistic improvement (and not altogether positively), rather than improvement in learning skills. In this case the SAC seems to have failed in increasing students' independent learning skills and probably (although this can not be determined from the data) their awareness of this function of the SAC.

Aston (1996) reports on a project in which a group of students were to explore the SAC and identify difficulties, report these to the other students and discuss them. They were asked to write down their findings in reports, notices etc. For eight weeks the students came together for approximately two hours. Although some useful information was gathered about the resources and its usefulness for the students, Aston reports that '...these suggestions mainly concern ... simpler areas of decision, those of choosing techniques and materials, rather than the more complex ones of clarifying objectives and evaluating results.' (p.291) This was in spite of the fact that a considerable amount of time was spent in total.

Sinclair & Ellis (1984), reporting on language enhancement programmes for overseas students in England, make the point that many of the students felt that it was the teacher's responsibility to ensure that learning took place and 'encouragement to work independently of the teacher was rejected and dissatisfaction with the course and loss of motivation the result.' (p.46)

Gardner (2000, private communication) reports on an as yet unpublished study at the Univeristy of Hong Kong, in which it was found that users of the SAC were simply not concerned with matters of independence, autonomy or taking responsibility. They only showed interest in improving their target language.

Others found more positive attitudes. Moulden (1988 p.90, cited by Broady 1996, p.215) found that 75 % of his students considered 'self-directed language learning more effective than teacher directed learning'. Broady (1996) adminsitered a questionnaire to 46 first year students. Since these took courses in applied linguistics this group may not be representative of the average student. The results indicated that although most students accepted responsibility for their learning, they also held other beliefs which could limit their capacity for self-direction. Respondents preferred teacher explanations and were generally not confident in self-assessment or in managing their learning.

Some researchers have tried to develop methods to measure learner autonomy. Sinclair (1999) argues that the development of learner autonomy can only be measured by subjective standards, i.e. from what the learners themselves say about it (or possibly from teachers). She focuses on metacognitive awareness as one of the crucial components of learner autonomy. She has developed a set of criteria for assessing levels of metacognitive awareness in learners. She uses interviews to determine whether students can provide a rationale for their choice of learning activities, describe the strategies they used, provide an evaluation of these strategies used, identify strengths and weaknesses, describe plans for learning, and describe alternative strategies. She also devised a set of questions to use in the interviews. Although her approach focuses on determining metacognitive awareness on the task-level (whereas we were more interested in a general understanding of learner autonomy), we have used some of her recommendations for determining metacognitive awareness on a macro-level.

Lai (forthcoming) notes the need for adopting a more analytical approach to assess learner capacity for self-direction (and therefore learner autonomy). She designed two measurement scales, for two levels of learner autonomy. The first one of these is process control, defined as

> 'a learner's ability to set realistic task aims for a chosen piece of material / activity, identify problems, employ relevant strategies to tackle the problems and to conduct self-assessment of the learning experience with an aim to set future challenges herself.' (p.1)

In short, a learner's ability to set approriate task aims and to self-assess in relation to that task aim. The second is self-direction and refers to 'a learner's ability to take charge of, self-organise or manage her own learning process' (p.6). This means setting realistic goals, identifying relevant materials, engaging in appropriate activities, adopting a specific approach to proceed with personal learning and conducting self-

assesment. She used these elements in the assessment of learner capacity for self-directed learning, by asking them to design a Personal Course, which allowed them to be in control of their own learning process. For the assessment, a seven-point scale was used to rate learners' abilities on these levels, making for an easier comparison. Although this approach was not appropriate in relation to our research questions, it does provide a means of making possible a more analytic assessment of how far students are on the 'learner autonomy continuum.'

3.4 Which factors help or hinder according to the students in SALL ?

Some of the previously discussed studies identified important factors that determined the sucessfulness of SALL. We will not fully describe these again, but only refer back to them. Gremmo (1988) found that many students had problems with learning in the SAC because of faulty materials, or for practical reasons, such as a lack of time. Another factor that played an important role was that of loneliness. Many students found they were not able to cope well with this, and had difficulties in working in a disciplined manner. As mentioned above, no improvement in independent learning was mentioned. On the contrary : the main cause of failure that students experienced when working in the SAC was their not being able to learn by themselves. It seems, therefore, that students have to be at least reasonably independent learners to become more independent learners.

Several researchers identified a good introduction (Richards 1999) and on-going support (Star 1994, Richards 1999) as crucial factors. Fernandez-Toro (1996) came to a similar conclusion that self-instruction needs a strong base in classroom teaching.

It is likely that there is a larger number of evaluations that identify factors, including those on a more practical level, that enhance or hinder effective SALL. However, since most of these are in-house evaluations, they are not easily available. In general it is only the implications from other studies that provide information on this topic.

3.5 Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that most research on the questions that we focus on has been descriptive rather than experimental. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods has been used, with questionnaires, interviews and learner logs being the most common instruments. Learners' perceptions have generally been the principal source of information on SALL. Although no decisive conclusions can be drawn from these studies, they do show the potential of SACs and have identified some factors that seem to influence its success or failure. Some studies have attempted to relate their findings to different variables involved such as learners' cultural and educational backgrounds, previous experience in SALL, language proficiency etc.

The effectiveness of SACs has proved to be difficult to measure. Language acquisition and the development of learner autonomy are notoriously hard to define and (especially in the case of language acquisition) attribute to SALL. Attempts are now being made to develop analytic measurement scales for learner autonomy. These instruments will certainly enhance future research. However, learners' perceptions are likely to remain important, especially since perceptions of what learner autonomy and SALL are, largely influence learning practice.

Chapter 4 : Research methodology

4.1 The English Proficiency Programme

The study was carried out durig the English Proficiency Programme (EPP) summer course at Victoria University Wellington from November 15 1999 to February 11 2000. The EPP is a thirteen-week intensive English course for international students. Most of them enrol in tertiary institutions in New Zealand, others are migrants to New Zeland who look for employment after the course. There are also government official who return to their home country after the course. The aims of the programme are to improve learners' performance in : 'reading and listening to complex information ; taking an active part in discussions ; expressing complex ideas and facts through speech and writing ; becoming an independent learner of English' (English Language Institute 1999). Elements in the course that were designed to contribute to the development of learner independence in the EPP are:

1. an ongoing learner-teacher dialogue
2. the study theme in the first week 'Learning a Language'
3. classroom tasks and materials are aimed to replicate real-life situations
4. student record booklet
5. self-access centre

(Cotterall 1995b, p.220)

Of these the Self-Access Centre will be our main focus. Below we will describe the self-access resources available for students in the course. Students spend an average of 40 hours per week on this course, little over half of which is class-time, with the other half taken up by seminars, electives and independent learning. There are several booklets to assist students in studying individually, especially the first week's theme booklet, 'Learning a Language'.

4.2 The Self-access centre

The ground floor of the building where most teaching takes place is entirely taken up with resources for language learning. All students learning foreign languages at VUW use these resources. During the summer trimester, however, there are few users other than EPP students. The whole area is called the Language Learning Centre (LLC), and would perhaps in other places be called the SAC. Within the centre, one specific room is called the SAC. In this room, learners can use dictionaries, grammar books, worksheets, magazines, SAC guides (sheets containing practical information about locating or accessing resources or containing advice on learning strategies). The only resources they can borrow from this room are simplified reading books. The room contains four large tables with the capacity to seat approximately 24 people, and three cassette players where students can listen to the simplified readers being read on cassette. Usually this is a quiet room.

There is also another larger room which houses 10 Macintosh computers and 2 PCs that can be used for text processing, email and internet as well as language software, 4 television monitors which broadcast satellite TV programmes (Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Italian, French, BBC world) as well as offering standard video playback facilities, and 10 audio booths with recording facilities. In addition, the LLC has two audio-visual classrooms with Tandberg IS 10 language laboratories installed (ie. one master console connected to 20 TSR5900 student cassette recorders) as well as two fixed video monitors in each. There is also a seminar room which students can book for private language practice, discussions or video viewing. The rest of the space is taken up by offices and equipment. (See Appendix A for a floor plan of the Language Learning Centre and appendix B for a floor plan of the SAC). There is also a seminar room, which students can book. The rest of the space is taken up by offices.

Two staff work behind the counter, issuing cassettes, videos and CD-Roms, as well as advising learners on learning materials and orienting them to the resources and facilities. An on-line catalogue of the LLC resources is available to help learners make choices about the materials they wish to work on. It is possible to select resources using this catalogue according to the language, the type of resource (i.e. audio cassette, video) and the level. There is also one staff member who divides her time between developing CALL programmes and training learners in using the CALL materials and computers, and a technician who services all the equipment in the Centre. The Centre is managed by an academic staff member and operates as an independent unit within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Language Advisory Sessions are available to students on request and there is a Language Buddy System that tries to bring together students to do language exchanges.

The LLC is open Monday to Friday from 8.45am to 5.15pm. At the beginning of each language course, one of the staff members gives learners an introductory tour of the LLC, lasting for approximately one hour. This tour normally includes an introduction to the main categories of resources, the computers, the on-line catalogue and procedures for borrowing materials and using the facilities. There is an additional introduction to the CALL resources in the second week of the course. In some cases, class teachers provide a more detailed introduction to the resources and the SAC room at a later date. Holec (1980, p. 27 moet gechecked worden) distinguishes between psychological and practical preparation. This introduction is of the latter kind. An ongoing psychological preparation, in Holec's words a 'deconditiong process', takes place from the first week of the course, when the first theme 'learning a language' is introduced. Learners are asked to reflect upon their ideas about language learning. Noticeboards give information about new resources, special activities etc. The LLC is open from Mondays till Fridays from 08:45 until 17:15.

During the summer course the author worked in the LLC, mainly in the SAC. From Mondays to Thursdays from one until four o'clock, he was in the SAC to assist students with any problems they had, whether in finding the right materials or in using them. He also helped students working with the computers or with any other of the materials in the LLC. In that sense, his presence was not confined to the SAC. Apart from this he tried various things to get students to make more use of the resources, for example by putting up signs on our notice boards, by having a 'special of the week' (a book or other type of resource that was highlighted for a week by putting it on a tray on one of the tables in the SAC) and by informing teachers about new resources or publications, asking them to pass it on to their classes. From now on we will only use the word 'SAC ' to denote all the resources, instead of 'LLC' as it is called at the university.

4.3 Subjects and ethical considerations

All the students in the English Proficiency Programme were subjects of this study. There were on average 150 students in the course (some left early, some arrived late). Most of them were from Asia and almost half of them are from China, Japan, Cambodia and Laos alone (see appendix C). There was approximately an equal number of men and women. A little less than half of them were enrolled in a course for government officials (ELTO course). These stay for two trimesters before going back home. Others are either in general courses or in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses. In general they stay in New Zealand to study or to work.

Victoria University, where the study took place, requires all research proposals to be sent to the Human Ethics Committee for approval. This committee applies strict rules in order to protect research subjects' privacy. One of the requirements for all research carried out involving humans, is that a consent form is given to all participants, describing the research project and asking for students' written consent to allow data to be used. In the second week of the course, the author visited every class and explained the project. There were no refusals to cooperate. The project description and the consent form have been included as appendix D and E. To further ensure subjects' privacy, the questionnaire was anonymous and all names that could identify subjects from the interviews have been removed from transcripts and reports. Another requirement of VUW is that results of a research project are reported back to its subjects. A short report was written containing the most important findings. This was given to the class teachers in the second last week of the course. Some of the teachers discussed the report in class, others hang them on the classroom notice boards.

4.4 Instruments: preparations, settings, responses

Riley (1996) tells us the analogy of the blind man who wants to know what soap bubbles are. Every time when he wants to touch them to feel their texture, they burst. It seems that he can only get to know what they are by listening to other peoples' descriptions. In investigating learner autonomy and SALL the same problem arises. Indirect methods therefore prevail in the literature and this study is no exception. All data gathered is based on students' perceptions. However, statistical analyses as well as a factor analysis have been performed and observations have been made in the SAC to provide additional information. Quantitative data was gathered by means of a quesionnaire, a user count and the SAC database. Qualitative data by means of the questionniare, observations and interviews. The study was entirely descriptive ; no experiments were undertaken of any kind. Quantitative results were accessed in SPSS (Statistical Package of the Social Sciences) version 9.0 . This programme was used to get descriptive information as well as for the subsequent analysis. Below we will describe the various instruments.

4.5 Questionnaire

As mentioned above, one of the ways we obtained answers to some of our research questions, was by administering a questionnaire to all the students. Questionnaires can contain open and closed questions. Closed questions are more amenable to quantification, but open questions often provide more meaningful information (Nunan 1992). We opted for a combination ; 25 questions of the questionnaire were of the closed type, 6 were open. Victori (1999a) warns that careful attention has to be given to the wording as non-native speakers might have problems in understanding what is meant. This is especially true for open questions. These should require the shortest possible answers, be precise and practical. The Likert scale (Openheim 1992: p.133-142) provides an easily quantifiable set of answers for closed questions, however care must be taken to ensure the overall consistency of the questions. If answers are ranked from negative to positve, or less to more, than all questions need to be in this order. Sixteen questions in the questionniare were of the 5-point type, five of the 4-point, two of the 3-point and one of the 2-point type. Since this questionnaire was also used for the evaluation report (Reinders 2000), some of the questions are less relevant in this context and will therefore not be reported on.

We chose the ninth week of the course to administer the questionnaire, since we expected that by then students would be able to give us informed answers about their self-access language learning. We deliberately avoided the last weeks of the course, since these tend to be a very stressful period for the students because of the final tests. This had the additional advantage of giving us enough time to process the questionnaire. We asked class teachers to hand out the questionnaire in the classroom and ask students to complete it. We did not ask teachers to give students time to do so in class, although all but one of them did. It was stressed, again, that there was no obligation for students to fill out the questionnaire. The questionnaires were anonymous. To allow us to correlate answers with proficiency levels, we asked students to provide us with their classroom numbers. The questionnaires were collected by the teacher in class time or returned later, and then handed back to the author. Because almost all of the questionnaires were handed out and completed by the students in class time, any problems with difficult vocabulary could be, and as teachers told us, have been, discussed with the teacher. Furthermore, we formulated the questions in a comprehensive way, avoiding the use of difficult words or difficult grammatical constructions. The open questions did not require students to provide abstract answers, but answers to practical matters such as what materials students wanted more of. Teachers reported not having had any major problems with the questionnaire (language-related, or other). However, it is possible that a lack of understanding by less proficienct students influenced some of their answers. The questionnaire is added as appendix F.

The overall response rate was very high. Of the 149 students enrolled in the course at that time, 124 completed the questionnaire. Eight of these were new students who had not been asked to participate, although two of them had. Considering the fact that on an average teaching day about ten students are absent due to illness or other obligations, the effective response rate was just under 95%. This applies to all classes except one. This was one of the classes where students were not given time in class to fill out the questionnaires. We could think of no other reasons why the response rate in this class was so low.

Probably a few of the questionnaires without class number came from this class. On the whole though, answers can said to be representative for all classes in the EPP.

classnumber

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	class 1	13	10.5
	class 2	13	10.5
	class 3	3	2.4
	class 4	13	10.5
	class 5	14	11.3
	class 6	14	11.3
	class 7	16	12.9
	class 8	11	8.9
	class 9	16	12.9
	Total	113	91.1
Missing	0	11	8.9
Total		124	100.0

4.6 Interviews

However, there was a need for more in-depth information on students' perceptions. As Benson & Lor (1999, p.460) note 'Questionnaire research, in particular, tends to give a snapshot of a learner's beliefs without telling us much about their functions or the ways in which they are open to change'. We therefore conducted 15 interviews with students in the EPP. Interiews in general are characterised by the degree of formality and the degree of structure they have (Nunan 1992). Highly formal settings (such as those found during examinations for example) may form an affective barrier that influences the responses. Structured interviews are highly organised. A fixed set of questions is asked during every interview. Unstructured interviews, on the other end of the continuum, contain no planned questions at all. Language problems may occur if the interview is not held in the interviewee's first language. In that case, extra care has to be taken to use clear language and to ensure that respondents understand what is being asked. Piloting can reveal any practical problems, especially when interviews are recorded.

We asked students whether they would be willing to do an interview. The purpose of the interviews, and indeed the whole research project had been explained to them earlier in class by the author, when giving students the consent forms. All the students who were approached, consented to doing an interview. We first did a number of pilot interviews that enabled us to change the wording of questions as well as the positioning of the microphone and to adjust some more practical matters. Students were selected at random, except two, who teachers had identified as possible non-users of the SAC. Nine of the students interviewed were from class one (the most proficient class). One student was from class two, one from class three, two from class four, one from class six and two from class eight (one interview was conducted with two students). Partly because of the high number of students from the more proficient classes, there were no insurmountable language problems. Sometimes questions had to be repeated or rephrased, sometimes students indicated their frustration at not being able to say what they wanted. On the whole, answers given by students during the interviews, were felt to be not too much distorted by their speaking in a language other then their own. However, this may have influenced the results.

Another factor is that the author worked in the SAC (see paragraph 4.2) and did the interviews. This might have influenced the results of the interviews. However, we do not believe this influence to be negative,

since the author knew all students in the course by name and students indicated feeling at ease talking to him about he course perhaps even more than with the teachers. The atmosphere during the interviews was generally relaxed. The interviews were conducted in the SAC seminar room with no other people present. Students were asked if they minded the interview being recorded. None of the students declined. Interviews were then recorded on Minidisc™ with a very small microphone placed on the table, that did not seem to have a great influence on interviewees' willingness to talk. The interviews were subsequently transcribed (not verbatim). Although more or less the same questions were asked during the interviews, the structure was flexible. Interesting topics that came up during the interviews were pursued. Therefore there was a considerable variety in the length of the interviews, ranging from 11 to over 30 minutes. On average interviews took about 15 minutes. We will refer to the resulst of these interviews below, and cite some of the responses. However, these respones were given in a particular context and therefore we have added abbreviated transcripts as appendix G.

4.7 Observations

During the whole course the author spent at least three hours every day in the SAC to give people advice on how to learn English, which materials to use etc. Many people came and requested help during the course. Also, two of the teachers in the EPP spent one afternoon per week in the SAC, to talk to students about their learning. They reported back to the author. These observations were helpful in that they reinforced some impressions from the interviews and questionnaire and suggested ways of approaching the data. No structural form of note-taking took place and therefore no hard claims can be made on the basis of the observations. They did provide a wealth of informaton that was useful for the evaluation of the resources. This aspect of the study has been reported on in an evaluation report (Reinders 2000).

4.8 User count

Some information on the usage of the resources was provided by a user count that was conducted during three weeks after the Christmas holiday. This was done by using the alarm gate at the entrance of the room that at VUW is called the SAC. This is only one of the rooms in the Language Learning Centre, the area that in other places would perhaps be called the SAC. This alarm goes of when people try to take materials out of the room without borrowing them. There is a small counter that counts the number of times people walk through the gat. These three weeks were much quieter than the weeks before the holiday, probably due to the imminent exams, so the overall figures are probably higher than this count suggests. We kept a record of the number of times staff went in and out of the room and subtracted this form the readings. On average there were 200 people per week, or forty per day. considering the fact that students have classes in the mornings until 12 o'clock and the SAC is open until 17:15, that means that there were approximately 8 students per hour in this room. Based on our observations, we expect these figures to have been almost 50% higer during the other weeks of the course.

4.9 the SAC database

Additional information was gathered from the SAC database that records every item issued over the counter. This allowed us to identify types of materials and specific materials that were used frequently by the SAC users.

Chapter 5 : Presentation of the data

We will proceed with the results of the study by discussing the three research questions individually. We will draw from the information gained from the various research instruments (see paragraph 4.4) and also

analyse the results statistically where appropriate. In addition, we will try to identify factors that influenced these results by attempting to relate the findings to supplementary information about :

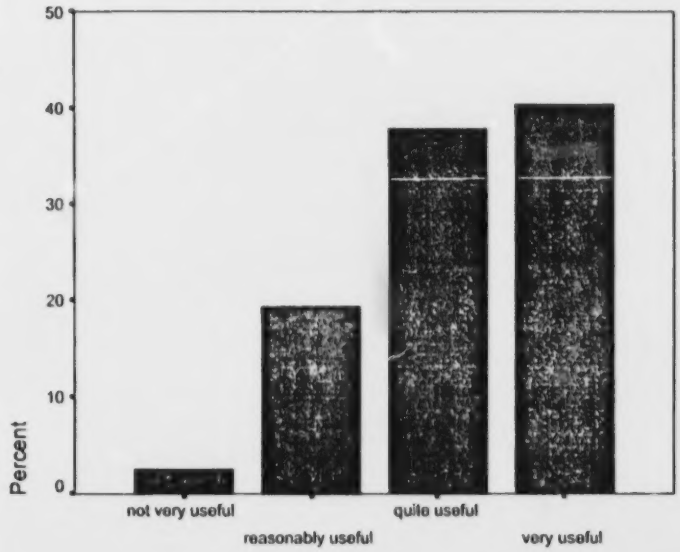
- learners' proficiency
- learners' experience in SALL
- learners' use of additional resources for their langauge learning
- learners' use of English outside the university
- learners' use of the Self-Access Centre

Finally we did a factor analysis that provides extra information about the outcomes of the study.

In the interviews and the questionnaire we used LLC (Language Learning Centre) to refer to the whole area dedicated to SALL at VUW, as this is how it is know to the students. However, here we use the term SAC.

5.1 What are students' perceptions of the usefulness of SALL ?

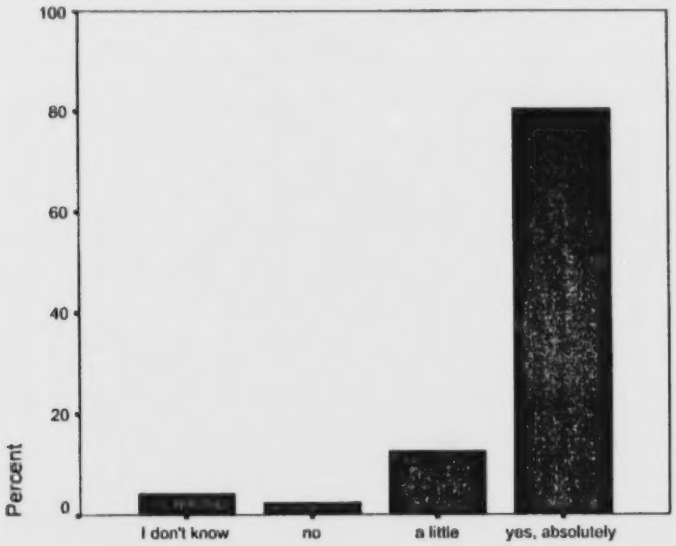
As mentioned above, one of the ways to determine the effectiveness of a SAC is by measuring its contribution to language learning. Question 3 of the questionnaire asked learners to rate the usefulness of learning in the SAC for learning English on a five point scale ranging from 'not at all useful' to 'very useful'. The following table shows the results :



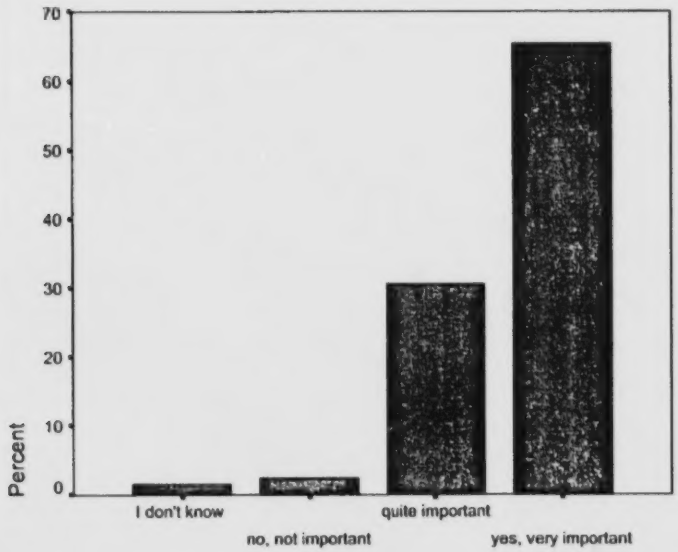
Almost 90% of the students reported that they thought learning in the Self-Access Centre was quite or very useful for learning English. None of the respondents found it 'not at all useful'. Question 18 was similar but asked about usefulness for their own development in English. This question scored even higher. In this respect then, the resources are evaluated very positively. However, it does not necessarily mean that students would have learned less or less quickly had they not had access to them. This is similar to what Moulden (1988) found. 75 % of his students found self-directed learning more efficient than teacher directed learning. However, we did not find evidence for students *preferring* independent learning.

A SAC can also said to be effective when it develops students' independent learning skills. Question 16 asked students if they thought that working in the SAC had helped them to learn how to learn English by

themselves. More than 80 % answered 'yes, absolutely'. This seems to imply that for this point the SAC was quite effective. However, the interviews gave us a different impression (see paragraph 5.2 about students' understanding of the concepts of learner autonomy and SALL). In any case, learners perceive SALL to be effective in this respect and this probably has a positive influence on students' motivation and pleasure in learning.



Question 17 asked students to rate the importance of learning to learn in a course like the EPP. More than 93% of the students saw 'learning to learn English by yourself' as either quite or (the majority) very important.

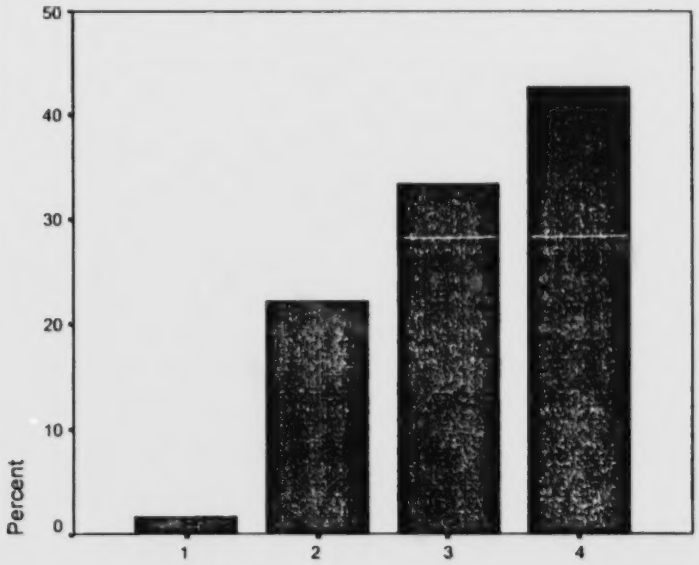


Question 4 of the questionnaire was an open question that says 'what (if anything) did you find particularly useful about the LLC ?'. Only one of the students spontaneously responded that it had helped her to become a better learner. All the other responses referred to materials. Since this question came before question 16 that asked students to say whether they thought if working in the Self-Access Centre had helped them to learn English by themselves in the future (i.e. to become more independent learners), this perhaps means that the development of learner independence is not something that immediately springs up in students' minds when thinking of Self-Access Language Learning.

Question 5 asked students to rate the usefulness of the different kinds of resources in the Self-Access Centre. Practically all resources were found to be useful. In this respect then, the Self-Access Centre seems to be efficient.

These were all the evaluative questions in the questionnaire. We thought it would be interesting to relate these to some of the other questions to see if there was a correlation. For this (and all other statistical computations, including the descriptive tables above) we used SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 9.0). Was students' perception of the usefulness of the Self-Access Centre to learn English related to how often they used the resources ? We first looked at students' frequency of use of the resources (question 1), which in itself is an (implicit) indicator of users' perception of the usefulness of resources.

How often did you use the LLC during the summer course ?



1 = never
2 = a few times
3 = usually once or twice a week
4 = usually more than twice a week

The user count (see paragraph 4.8) showed that there were approximately 200 users per week, or forty per day. Since students have classes in the mornings until 12 o'clock, and the SAC is open until 17:15, this means an average of 8 users per hour. These figures are lower than those before the Christmas holiday, but we don't have exact numbers for that period. Also, these figures are only for users of the room called the SAC (see appendix B) at VUW. The whole floor is called the Language Learning Centre (see paragraph 4.2) and had considerably more users.

Then we related this to students' perception of the usefulness of working in the SAC for learning English. We expected a correlation here and therefore used a one-tailed test. There was indeed a significant (at the 0.01 level) correlation of .286 (Kendall's Tau) and .319 (Spearman's Rho).

Correlations

			how often did you use the llc during the summer course	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?
Kendall's tau_b	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.286**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	117	112
	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	.286**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	112	119
Spearman's rho	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.319**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	117	112
	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	.319**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	112	119

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

Students who use the resources more, are more positive about its effects on their development in English. It could be that their perception of the usefulness influences their frequency of use. But it could also mean that frequency of use influences their peception of the usefulness. In other words, if learners are required to use the Self-Access Centre they might start to value it more.

In order to answer this question we compared students' use of the resources with an additional question that asked students to say if they mostly did things their teacher told them to do or things they decided to do when working in the Self-Access Centre. There was a significant (at the .05 level) correlation of .218 (Kendall's Tau) and .230 (Spearman's Rho).

Correlations

			how often did you use the llc during the summer course	When you work in the LLC, you
Kendall's tau_b	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.218*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.025
		N	117	96
	When you work in the LLC, you	Correlation Coefficient	.218*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	.
		N	96	103
Spearman's rho	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.230*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.024
		N	117	96
	When you work in the LLC, you	Correlation Coefficient	.230*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.024	.
		N	96	103

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

People who mostly did things they themselves decided to do, used the SAC more than students who did things their teachers told them to do. Compulsion, is probably not the best way to make people use the SAC. However, the correlation was very low.

We also expected a correlation between students' use of the resources and their perception of its usefulness for learning to learn.

Correlations

			how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?
Kendall's tau_b	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.307**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	117	111
	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	Correlation Coefficient	.307**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	111	118
Spearman's rho	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.330**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	117	111
	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	Correlation Coefficient	.330**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	111	118

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

There was indeed a significant (at the .01 level) correlation of .307 (Kendall's tau) and .330 (Spearman's rho). Students who use the resources more, value its potential to help them to learn how to learn higher. Again here this could be *because of* their work in the Self-Access Centre, or because they rate the importance of learning to learn higher and therefore use the resources more as one way of reaching this goal. If this were true, than raising students' awareness of the importance of independent learning could lead to a higer use of the self-access resources.

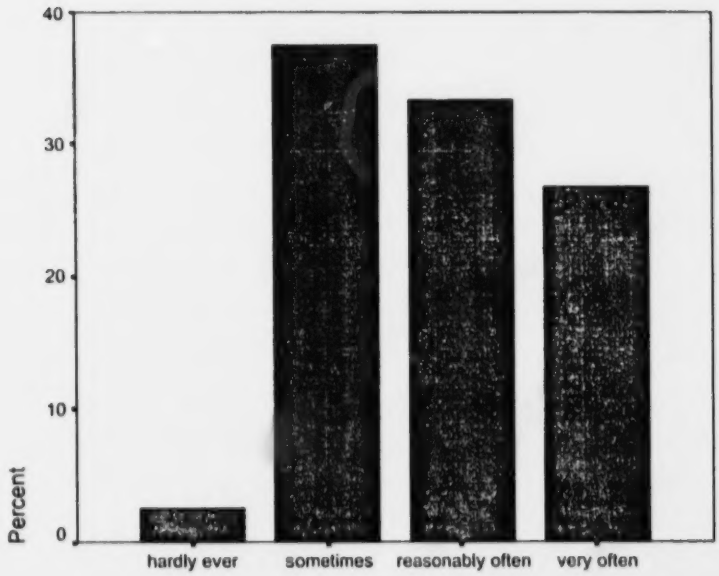
To see if this was so, we compared frequency of use with students' perception of the importance of learning to learn English in a course like the EPP.

Correlations

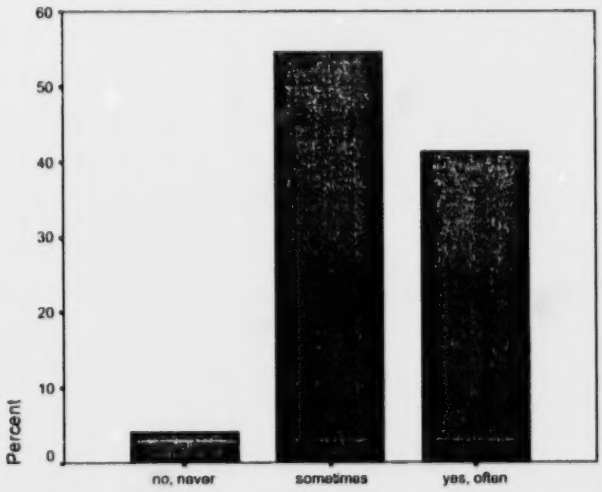
			how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?
Kendall's tau_b	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.050
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.282
		N	117	114
	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	Correlation Coefficient	.050	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.282	.
		N	114	121
Spearman's rho	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.054
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.285
		N	117	114
	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	Correlation Coefficient	.054	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.285	.
		N	114	121

There was no correlation. The higher value that regular users of the self-access recourses attribute to them for learning to learn is probably a result of their work, rather than of any preconceptions about it.

Teachers in the EPP have always had the idea that many of their students did not use English much outside the classroom, despite their living in an English speaking country. To verify this we asked the students to tell us how often they used English outside VUW. The results are quite distressing.



Almost 40 % of the students admitted to only using English 'sometimes'. From observations made during the course and from additional information from the interviews, it seems likely to us that these numbers are even too optimistic. Perhaps students are afraid or not used to seeking contacts outside their community. The majority of the students in the EPP come from South-East Asia and tend to live together with people from their own country. They do not in general come into frequent contact with New Zealanders. Could this be in any way reflected in their perception of the usefulness of Self-Access Language Learning ? It could be for example that Self-Access Language Learning is to them a safe and non-threatening way of learning English, protecting them from having to interact with native speakers. In that case it would be a fortress rather than a bridge to the outside world (Gardner & Miller, see paragraph 2.1). This impression seems to be reinforced by the fact that 60 % of learners reported using resources other than the Self-Access Centre only 'sometimes' or even 'never'.



These learners would probably also work in the SAC more and use English less. To see if this was true we looked at the correlation between frequency of use and frequency of using English outside VUW. However, we found none. It seems then that the use of the SAC is not related to the use of English, but this is contradicted by other findings (see below). We also did not find a correlation between frequency of use and students' use of other resources such as the main library or the public library, nor between use of English and perception of the usefulness of the SAC for learning English or learning to learn. There was however a correlation between how important students found the development of independent learning skills in a course like the EPP and their use of English outside the univeristy.

Correlations

			Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	how often do you use English outside VUW
Kendall's tau_b	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.241**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
		N	121	119
	how often do you use English outside VUW	Correlation Coefficient	.241**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
		N	119	120
Spearman's rho	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.261**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
		N	121	119
	how often do you use English outside VUW	Correlation Coefficient	.261**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
		N	119	120

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

There was a significant (at the .01 level) but weak correlation of .241 (Kendall's tau) and .261 (Spearman's rho). Students who use English more outside the university find the development of independent learning skills more important. However, since there was no relationship between frequency of their use of English and their perception of the usefulness of the SAC, this strenghtens the impression that they do not see the SAC as a good place to develop their independent learning skills. These learners also make more use of other resources, such as the university library and the public library.

Correlations

			how often do you use English outside VUW	Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?
Kendall's tau_b	how often do you use English outside VUW	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.268**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.001
		N	120	119
	Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?	Correlation Coefficient	.268**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	.
		N	119	121
Spearman's rho	how often do you use English outside VUW	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.291**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.001
		N	120	119
	Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?	Correlation Coefficient	.291**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	.
		N	119	121

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

There was a significant (at the .01 level) but weak correlation (one-tailed) of .268 (Kendall's Tau) and .291 (Spearman's rho). Students who use other resources more also use English more. It would be interesting to see if there is a causal relationship between these two. If students start to use other resources more, will they also start to use English more ? Of course a little bit, because the use of these resources requires the use of English. But could it be that the interaction with authentic materials stimulates learners to use English more frequently ?

Students who found the SAC more important for learning English also found learning to learn more important.There was a significant (at the .01 level) correlation of .392 (Kendall's tau) and .405 (Spearman's rho). It seems therefore possible for both students who use English more and don't find the self-access resouces important for their learning and for students who find the SAC important for their learning, to agree with the importance of independent language learning. There are obviously different orientations to learning that lead to the same ideas.

Correlations

			How important for you is the work you do in the LLC for learning English ?	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?
Kendall's tau_b	How important for you is the work you do in the LLC for learning English ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.392**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	119	119
	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	Correlation Coefficient	.392**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	119	121
Spearman's rho	How important for you is the work you do in the LLC for learning English ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.405**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	119	119
	Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	Correlation Coefficient	.405**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	119	121

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

We did find three other factors that influence students' perception of the usefulness of the Self-Access Centre. At the beginning of the course there is an introduction to the resources by one of the staff members of the SAC (see paragraph 4.2). There is a reasonably strong relationship between how useful students found this introduction and their perception of the usefulness of the SAC for both learning English and learing to learn.

Correlations

			How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?
Kendall's tau_b	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.408**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	119	112
	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	.408**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	112	116
Spearman's rho	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.441**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	119	112
	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	.441**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	112	116

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

There was a significant (at the .01 level) correlation of .408 (Kendall's Tau) and .441 (Spearman's rho) between perception of usefulness of the SAC for learning English and perception of the usefulness of the introduction.

Correlations

			How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?
Kendall's tau_b	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.404**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	116	114
	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	Correlation Coefficient	.404**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	114	118
Spearman's rho	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.440**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	116	114
	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	Correlation Coefficient	.440**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	114	118

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

There was also a significant (at the .01 level) correlation of .404 (Kendall's Tau) and .440 (Spearman's rho) between perception of usefulness of the SAC for learning to learn and perception of the usefulness of the introduction.

The second factor influencing the perception of the usefulness for learning English is the presence of someone in the SAC to give help and advice. There was a significant (at the .01 level) but weak correlation of .262 (Kendall's Tau) and .291 (Spearman's rho) between perception of usefulness of the SAC for learning English and perception of the usefulness of support.

Correlations

			How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?
Kendall's tau_b	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.262**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
		N	119	110
	How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?	Correlation Coefficient	.262**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
		N	110	114
Spearman's rho	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.291**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002
		N	119	110
	How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?	Correlation Coefficient	.291**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
		N	110	114

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Interestingly enough there was no correlation between the perception of usefulness of this type of support and the perception of the usefulness of the SAC for learning to learn. Obviously this kind of support has not helped in making learners more independent (or at least, students do not think so).

A third factor that influenced perception of the usefulness of the SAC for learning to learn was the difficulty that learners had in finding the right materials.

Correlations

			How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?
Kendall's tau_b	How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.218**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.005
		N	116	113
	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	Correlation Coefficient	-.218**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.005	.
		N	113	118
Spearman's rho	How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.245**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.004
		N	116	113
	Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	Correlation Coefficient	-.245**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.004	.
		N	113	118

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

There was a significant (at the .01 level) but weak correlation of -.218 (Kendall's Tau) and -.245 (Spearman's rho) between perception of usefulness of the SAC for learning to learn and the difficulty that learners had in finding the right materials. The more difficult they found it, the less useful the found the SAC in terms of helping them to become more independent learners.

There was no correlation between previous experience in working in a SAC and the degree to which students' rated the resources as useful. Since only 9 % of the users said they had much previous experience with working in a SAC like the one at VUW, this means that their perceptions of the resources were not 'couloured' by comparisons and fixed attitudes.

These general tendencies gave us useful information. However, could it be that particular groups, such as more proficient students, had distinct perceptions of the SAC ? There were nine classes, the first seven of which are in a higher-lower proficiency order. The higher the class number, the lower the proficiency (although of course it is difficult to determine proficiency levels solely on the basis of the intake test). We expected lower proficiency classes to have used the SAC more, since we expected higher proficiency students to make more use of other resources. Therefore we did a one-tailed test. There was a significant (at the .05 level) but very weak correlation of .168 (Kendall's Tau) and .213 (Spearman's Rho).

Correlations

			classnumber	how often did you use the llc during the summer course
Kendall's tau_b	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.168*
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.034
		N	86	82
	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	.168*	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.034	.
		N	82	82
Spearman's rho	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.213*
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.027
		N	86	82
	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	.213*	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.027	.
		N	82	82

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

More proficient users seem to use the SAC less. Do they then make more user of other resources, such as the public library and the main university library ? There was a significant (at the .01 level) correlation of -.318 (Kendall's Tau) and -.374 (Spearman's Rho) . This meant that the less proficient the class, the less they made use of other resources.

Correlations

			classnumber	Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?
Kendall's tau_b	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.318**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.001
		N	86	84
	Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?	Correlation Coefficient	-.318**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.
		N	84	84
Spearman's rho	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.374**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	86	84
	Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?	Correlation Coefficient	-.374**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	84	84

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Why is this so ? Do more profient users see the self-access resources as less useful to learn English ? We found a significant (at the .05 level) but very weak correlation of .189 (Kendall's Tau) and .226 (Spearman's Rho). It seems that more proficient learners see learning in the SAC as a less useful way to learn English than less proficient students.

Correlations

			classnumber	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?
Kendall's tau_b	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.189*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.038
		N	86	83
	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	.189*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.
		N	83	83
Spearman's rho	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.226*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.040
		N	86	83
	How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	Correlation Coefficient	.226*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.
		N	83	83

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Do more proficient students also find the self-access resources less useful for learning how to learn ? Before we ask that question, we have to see if there is a difference between how more and less proficient students see the usefulness of the goal of developing learner independence in a course like the EPP. There was however no correlation. Nor was there in the perception of the usefulness of the SAC to learn how to learn.

As was to be expected, less proficient students used English less outside VUW. There was a significant (at .01 level) correlation of -.269 (Kendall's Tau) and -.327 (Spearman's Rho). This seems logical, but it also means that the SAC is only used by less confident students. Could it be because students see the SAC as non-appealing, for beginners only ? The interviews did not seem to counter this claim. However, follow-up research needs to clarify this.

Correlations

			classnumber	how often do you use English outside VUW
Kendall's tau_b	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.269**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.004
		N	86	82
	how often do you use English outside VUW	Correlation Coefficient	-.269**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.
		N	82	82
Spearman's rho	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.327**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.003
		N	86	82
	how often do you use English outside VUW	Correlation Coefficient	-.327**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.
		N	82	82

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Since the use of English is related to proficiency and proficiency is related to the use of the SAC, this seems to contradict the finding reported on above that there was no correlation between the use of English and the use of the SAC. Perhaps this is because the correlations are not very high, or perhaps there is just no direct relationship between the two.

In addition to the questionnaire, we also conducted interviews (see paragraph 4.7 for more information) to get more qualitative data. As described above, a similar set of questions was asked during the interviews, enabling us to gather information on a few, related topics. One of these was students' perception of the importance of their independent learning compared to their learning in class. This is also related to students' understanding of Self-Access Language Learning, and will therefore be dealt with again below. Here however we are interested in subjective statements about the usefulness of these two types of learning. Although almost all of the students were very positive about the resources, several students said that they found the learning in class to be the most important. When asked why this was so, some indicated that they had no time, and others said they would like to but were 'too lazy'. (In terms of the model of learner autonomy presented in parargraph 1.9, these learners either lack self-motivation or just don't take the responsibility of actually engaging in this kind of learning.) Others were more explicit in their preference for classroom-based learning. One student said : 'To follow the teacher is the best way, I think. It's useful for me to improve my English, the teacher teaches you step-by-step, the teacher knows what you need, what your weakness is.' Another student found independent learning mainly useful when it is related to what goes on in class : 'But if we do similar things here (i.e. the SAC) to what we do in class, than it's good and useful'. Clearly, not all students see independent learning as useful.

Others were more enthusiastic about their own learning. When asked why, two students said it was because a teacher cannot explain everything. One of them added that he or she can only show you how to do things, but you would still have to do it yourself. Other people said similar things, saying that they saw what happened in class as their getting guidelines for their own learning, or said they practiced outside the class what they had learned in class. Two students said they felt they had learned most from what they did by themselves: 'The teacher shows you the way more than tells you what to do. I feel that I do most of the work by myself. In class you're just showed how to do it after which you go and really work.'

And: 'What we do by ourselves is most important, the biggest improvement I got was from out class. ('How?') By talking with friends, of being in an English-speaking country. But of course in class we get a lot of basic examples, I practice it outside the class.'

When asked to be more explicit about the advantages of SALL and the development of independent learning skills, some students said that learning in the LLC enabled them to work on things they were really interested in. Others saw the need for developing their independent learning skills, either to continue to study after the course, or to teach other people. One of them said: 'You might get used to only learn while you're in the course, and than forget after. By insisting on the fact that you should know which is the most efficient way to learn by yourself, is useful for the rest of you life. ('Can a Self-Access Centre help with this?) Yes, there are a lot of materials. By having a variety of materials, enables students with different needs to use their own techniques and strategies.' Even a student who seemed very reluctant about accepting any responsibility for his own learning, admitted that the strategies and techniques he had learned in class were useful for him for the future. In general, almost all of the students agreed to the importance of independent learning and were able to see advantages in it.

The questionnaire showed that most students found the development of their independent learning skills an important goal of a course like the EPP. When asked about this point during the interviews, most students concurred and gave several reasons for it. The importance of being able to continue to learn after the course has finished was mentioned a few times: 'Yes, you might get used to only learn while you're in the course, and than forget after. By insisting on the fact that you should know which is the most efficient way to learn by yourself, is useful for the rest of you life'. And: 'The course is quite packed, we are preparing for (some of us) tertiary education, it's quite the good to learn the language by ourself, it's a self-experience strategy for the future, for example when you read something, we get used to difficult texts, and we can use that strategy in the future'. This student refers to the development of strategies, as does the following : '...the teacher showed how to use the LLC, how to read articles, to use strategies, sometimes I will learn by myself, it's useful, now when I read a newspaper I use the method the teacher taught us.'

Some participants were also asked whether they thought the course had actually helped them to become more independent learners. Most said it had. One student linked this to an improvement of his English : 'Yes, before this course I didn't realise about that, so now I understand that independent learning is very important and I concentrated on my independent learning. After realising that my English improves more.'

Some of the interviews included a question about the Independent Learning Record Booklet (paragrahp 4.1), that is available to students to record their learning progress and set learning goals. Although students are informed about it in the first week and are urged to record their learning progress throughout the course, almost none of the participants in the interviews responded using them. The reasons they give for this are that they have either found their preferred way of studying, prefer to make plans by themselves or are 'too lazy' to use it. Some even said they had never heard of it.

5.2 What do students understand by learner autonomy and SALL ?

The findings reported on above already gave us some information on what learner autonomy and Self-Access Language Learning are to students. Here we will try to advance this question further. This is particularly important since most students (93 %) see the development of independent learning skills as an important part of a course like the EPP and a large number (around 90 %) say that the SAC has been instrumental in this. So what do they think this entails ? And are there any signs that contradict these findings ?

As mentioned before, none of the respondents referred to the development of their independent learning skills when asked to say what the most useful aspect of the SAC was. It could just be that the question was misunderstood, but it could also be that it is not a very salient aspect of SALL, even though the students might agree with its importance when explicitly asked so.

Question 5 of the questionnaire asked learners to rate the usefulness of different kinds of resources available in the SAC. Of interest here is that the Self-Access Guides (see paragraph 4.1), that contain information about additional resources and information about strategies for (independent) learning, were

the least popular type of resources. Only 38.7 % of the respondents rated them as useful, whereas for example listening resources scored over 80 %. Nobody requested more Self-Access-Guides when asked what materials they would like to have more of . This could mean that the guides are badly written, or perhaps it is an indication that students see the Self-Access resources more as a convenient collection of materials rather than as a place to actively work on their independent learning skills.

Likewise, when asked what the most difficult aspect of working in the SAC was, none of the answers referred to matters of planning, monitoring progress, evaluating etc. Again, it could be that students interpreted this question as being about the resources more than their learning, but even that indicates that students see the SAC primarily as a resource centre. It seems that students don't know what they don't know.

Almost 40 % of the students said they used English only 'sometimes' outside the university. Although there is no direct link between learner autonomy on the one hand and the use of authentic materials and real-life communication on the other, in general a higher degree of independence is accompanied by them. Although most students said that working in the SAC had helped them to become more independent learners, this probably did not mean to them using the target language more. If that is true, then finding opportunities and actually using the language are not seen by students as something related to the development of learner independence. However, we did not ask students directly about this point and it remains therefore unclear.

Although most students said that working in the SAC had helped them to learn how to learn, 60 % said they found it difficult to find the right materials. The interviews and other questions on the questionnaire asking for recommendations and problems about using the Self-Access Centre did not reveal any problems with the way materials are organised. In fact, students get an introduction to the resources, a CALL introduction, there are two staff available and the author was present every day during this particular course. In addition to this there is an interactive computer catalogue and a hard copy of the catalogue. Most of the resources are on display, so students can browse through different categories (writing, listening, grammar etc) . Also, some materials are colour-coded to indicate level. It is therefore not a menu-driven system whereby learners have to make a choice solely on the basis of the descriptions of the materials and their knowledge of them. Yet, by the second half of the course students still had considerable problems in finding the right resources. This question will be dealt with again in the next section, but what interests us here is that students had not yet developed one of the most important skills in independent learning : the ability to find appropriate resources. Obviously, although students said that working in the SAC had helped them to become more independent learners, this did not mean that they developed this skill. These findings seem to contradict each other. It could be that the SAC did not help students with this, or it could be that students don't see being able to locate appropriate materials as a skill related to, or important for, independent learning.

There was one other point in the data that could provide further information about this. More proficient students use the SAC less and find it less useful for the development of their English and their independent learning skills. These students are probably better able to locate resources because of their better understanding of English (there was a weak but significant (at the .05 level) correlation of .199 (Kendall's tau) and .254 (Spearman's rho) between proficiency and the difficulty students had in finding the right materials in the SAC). But (taking into account their educational backgrounds) there is no reason to believe that these students are better at planning, monitoring and other skills related to independent learning. So it could be that they see the SAC merely as a collection of resources they don't need because they have the skills to find other resources. Less proficient students do not have these skills and therefore find the resources more useful. However, we have no hard data to back these claims, and they therefore remain hypotheses.

But when we look at the interviews we do get a clearer picture of how students perceive independent learning. The course tries to make learners take more responsibility for their learning and equip them with the necessary skills to do so. Learners are encouraged to take what they learn in class beyond the classroom situation, find new opportunities for learning and in general immerse themselves in the target language. More than 90 % of the students found this an important goal in a course like the EPP. However

when asked which was more important for their learning, their work in the classroom, or the work they do by themselves, not all students were so sure. For some of them the classroom was the most important source of learning because they were too 'lazy', finding it hard to work on their own. Other said they did not have time to work on their own and did not use the language much outside the classroom: 'Classroom, because of the speaking. I don't speak a lot outside the class.' Others were more explicit in their preference for classroom-based learning. One student said 'To follow the teacher is the best way, I think. It's useful for me to improve my English, the teacher teaches you step-by-step, the teacher knows what you need, what your weakness is'. Another student said : 'Class is more important, the teacher can follow-up. Non-class work we do in spare time. Self-learning I don't feel the significance of the progress.' This student found it difficult to monitor progress. Another student equates independent learning with reading, saying : 'Classroom, it's more interactive, correction. By reading a book, you learn new words or grammatical structure, by listening and speaking to others, you have more input, more different kinds of learning. Reading might be boring.'

We have to keep in mind here that students live in a second language environment. The course is only three hours per day for three days a week, five hours for two days a week week. The remainder of the time is for homework, self-study (as part of the programme) and of course using the language. However, for a number of students, the classroom still provides almost all of their learning opportunities.

Another quite revealing question asked students whether and how they noticed that the development of learner independence (usually phrased as 'learning to learn English by yourself') was a part of the course. It is here that we touch upon the shallowness of students' understanding of what learner independence entails. Some of the answers : 'Yes, he shows how to learn vocabulary, pronunciation. I record my voice and he corrects it, I sometimes do it myself' , 'Yes, I enjoy our course very much, because we get a lot of knowledge how to learn English. Our teacher gave us homework to listen to the news every day, tells us to read. They show us how to paraphrase, how to write, how to connect topics, they give a lot of examples' , 'When we write essays, the teachers gives examples. The teacher suggest topics, resources we can use, sends us to library' , 'Yes, for example the use of graded readers. I think that's useful because it's nicer to read not too difficult books' , 'Yes. Our teacher shows us materials and strategies for studying'. Many students refer to the teacher as a source of knowledge useful for independent learning. The main source of direction is still with the teacher. Perhaps more importantly, they talk about the development of strategies and techniques for learning as an important example of the promotion of learner independence. And these strategies are all cognitive strategies. None of the respondents mentioned metacognitive strategies, such as planning or monitoring progress.

As already mentioned in paragraph 5.2, students said they did not use the Independent Learning Record Booklet (see paragraph 4.1). Although it would be unlikely that this style of working would fit everyone and it had not been actively promoted by all class teachers, it is remarkable that none of the students used this planning and monitoring device, to improve their independent learning skills. Again students did not seem to develop any metacognitive skills.

This was also clear from several inconsistencies in the answers individual students gave to different questions. For example one student said she felt confident about learning by herself, but later said she found the Independent Learning Record Booklet difficult to use by herself, and also found planning difficult. This student, like most perhaps, did no see planning as an essential part of independent learning. Since most students said they had worked in the SACegularly, this means that it did not help them to become more aware of what independent learning is. Nor did they gain the necessary skills by working there. In this sense, the SACas not very successful.

5.3 Which factors enhance or inhibit SALL ?

Question 2 of the questionnaire asked students who had rarely used the SAC to tell us why this was so. Since most students used the resources often, there were not many responses to this question. The most frequently mentioned reason was lack of time. None of the responses revealed any structural problems in the working of the Self-Access Centre.

Question 9 was similar but asked all students about the most difficult thing about working in the Self-Access Centre. Again time was mentioned, as well as the computers.

Questions 4 to 7 showed that especially the listening materials and also the computer programmes were rated very positively. The information from the SAC database confirmed this. Probably these materials have a high face validity for students and therefore are likely to provide good ways of making people use the resources more.

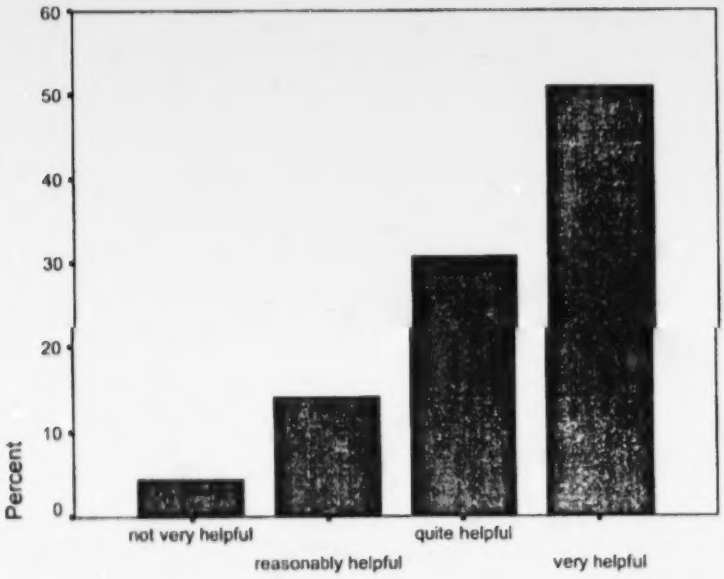
Already in paragraph 5.1 we saw that the introduction was a factor related to students' perception of the usefulness of the resources. A poor introduction does not provide students with sufficient knowledge of the resources and is a severe handicap for them when using the SAC. It is also related to students' use of the resources. There was a significant (at the .05 level) but weak correlation of .189 (Kendall's tau) and .210 (Spearman's rho) between students' perception of the usefulness of the introduction and their use of the resources.

Correlations

			how often did you use the llc during the summer course	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?
Kendall's tau_b	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.189*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.029
		N	117	109
	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	.189*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.029	.
		N	109	116
Spearman's rho	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.210*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.028
		N	117	109
	How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	.210*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.
		N	109	116

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Also the presence of the author in the SAC was influential. The on-going support was evaluated very positively by students. More than 80 % found his presence either 'quite' or 'very' helpful.



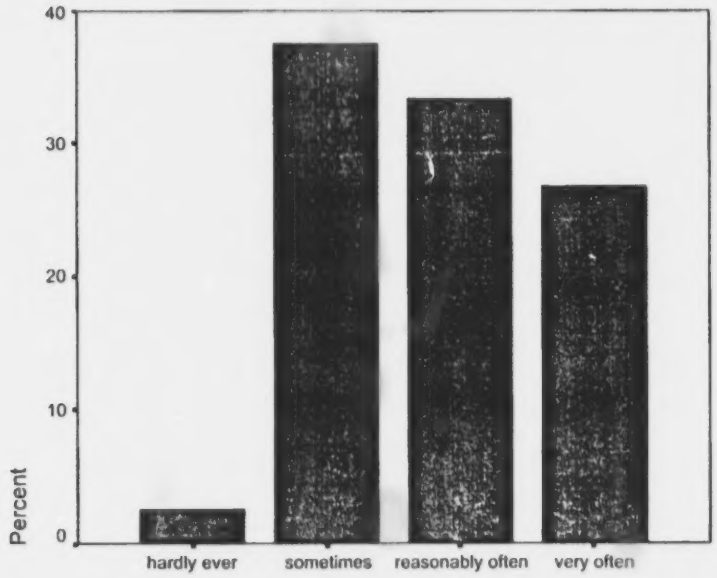
There was a significant (at the .05 level) but weak correlation of .171 (Kendall's tau) and .193 (Spearmans' rho) between students' perception of his presence and their use of the resources. Although the direction of the causality can not be determined, it could be that the extra support, approachability and friendliness (as mentioned by students during the interviews) had a small influence on the number of students using the resources.

Correlations

			how often did you use the llc during the summer course	How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?
Kendall's tau_b	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.171*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.047
		N	117	109
	How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?	Correlation Coefficient	.171*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.047	.
		N	109	111
Spearman's rho	how often did you use the llc during the summer course	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.193*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.044
		N	117	109
	How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?	Correlation Coefficient	.193*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.044	.
		N	109	114

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

As mentioned before, many students had difficulties in finding the right materials. The graph below shows the figures.



When asked for additional suggestions (question 19), several students requested more help and the presence of teachers in the SAC. There are two possible explanations for this. Either the resources are badly organised, the staff and the helper not very useful and the catalogue difficult to work with, or students did not develop the skill of locating appropriate resources during this course. Both possibilities have serious implications. If the latter explanation is to be given here (in line with our discussion in paragraph 5.2) then this means that the classroom does not provide students with the necessary skills, and that there are no facilitating resources (pathways for examples) in the SAC that allow students to develop them by working there. Links between the classroom and the resources are probably too weak or absent. Perhaps this presents one of the greatest obstacles to using the SAC. The potential of the resources is not unleashed.

One of the obstacles in this respect could be the use of language which is too difficult for some students in the Centre. There was a significant (at the .05 level) but very small correlation of .199 (Kendall's tau) and .254 (Spearman's rho) between students' proficiency and the difficulty they had in finding the right materials.

Correlations

			classnumber	How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?
Kendall's tau_b	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.199*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.027
		N	86	80
	How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	.199*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.
		N	80	116
Spearman's rho	classnumber	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.254*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.023
		N	86	80
	How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?	Correlation Coefficient	.254*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.
		N	80	116

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

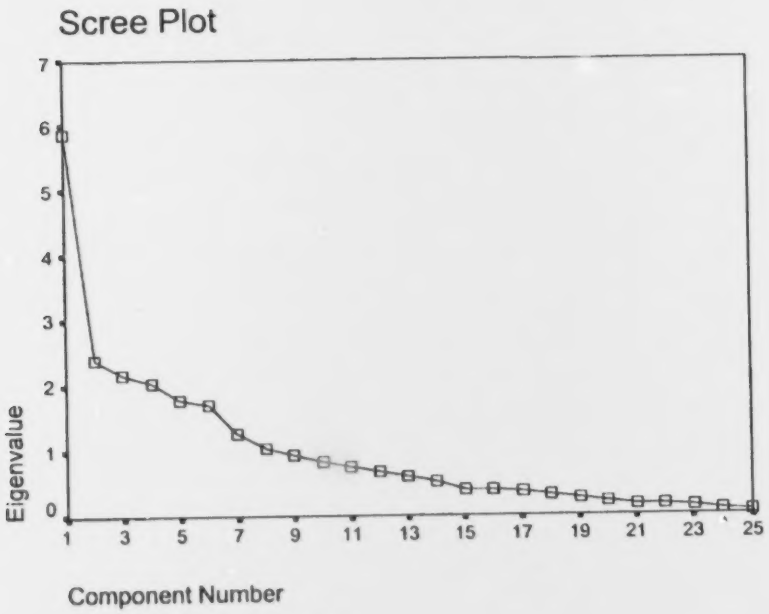
Another obstacle already reported on and probably related to what has been said above about a poor integration of SALL into the class curriculum is that more proficient students could not be made to use the resources more. They probably did not see the advantage of it over other resources and thus were probably not made aware of them.

There was no relationship between previous experience with working in a SAC and the difficulty students had in using the resources.

The interviews confirmed the impression gained from the questionnaire that a lack of time was one of the main obstacles in using the SAC. The interviews did not reveal any additional inhibiting factors. Elements that helped in using the resources were the presence of the author in the SAC, friendly staff and the large number and good quality of the resources

5.4 Factor analysis

In addition to the questions above, we did a factor analysis to see if groups of questions were related to each other. We used quartimax rotation and excluded all components with an Eigenvalue under 1. The scree plot clearly shows there is one strongly related group and seven others with an Eigenvalue over 1.



The rotated component matrix below shows which questions these eight different components comprise of.

Rotated Component Matrix [a]

	Component							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
How useful did you find the grammar books and exercises ?	.845	.162	.118	8.531E-02	-.239	5.875E-02	.197	4.963E-02
How useful did you find the vocabulary books and exercises ?	.838	.264	-4.90E-02	-.109	.151	-.103	-2.12E-02	.133
How useful did you find the dictionaries ?	.778	-.126	.258	.159	8.150E-03	-7.14E-03	.109	-5.57E-03
How useful did you find the video tapes ?	.667	1.163E-02	.347	9.306E-02	.257	.185	-.153	-.240
How useful did you find the audio tapes ?	.608	.378	-7.87E-02	6.005E-02	.519	-6.11E-02	-2.68E-02	-.129
How useful did you find the listening materials ?	.193	.754	6.680E-03	-.151	-4.55E-02	3.250E-02	4.843E-02	-.126
Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future ?	-.171	.649	1.103E-02	.138	.184	.191	-.103	-.130
how often did you use the llc during the summer course	.163	.641	.159	.415	8.485E-02	.198	.133	-1.73E-02
How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?	.226	.598	.315	.312	-.181	-.143	.129	-9.24E-03
How useful did you find the computer programmes ?	1.968E-02	.553	.499	-.106	.216	.160	-8.84E-02	-9.96E-02
How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?	.131	.518	.171	.263	.166	-.453	.126	1.184E-02
Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library ?	-.291	-.488	6.983E-02	.268	.380	.378	7.569E-02	-7.75E-02
How useful do you find the other reading materi	.188	-2.84E-02	.799	5.756E-02	-.283	-9.85E-02	-.150	-.208
Ho useful did you find the Graded Readers	.103	.147	.789	2.722E-02	.187	-.180	8.501E-02	.175
How useful did you find the graded readers with cassettes?	.221	.343	.605	-4.51E-02	.205	.230	.152	.272
Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn English by yourself ?	3.587E-02	1.171E-03	9.897E-02	.851	-1.78E-02	-8.09E-02	-.142	-6.23E-03
How important for you is the work you do in the LLC for learning English ?	.113	.188	5.439E-02	.734	-.303	-.148	.175	.103
how often do you use English outside VUW	4.594E-03	2.779E-02	-.289	.566	.249	.186	2.075E-02	-5.92E-02
How useful did you find the sac guides ?	.339	5.172E-02	.313	.368	.366	.345	.319	.123
How useful did you find the satellite TV ?	9.466E-02	8.008E-02	8.363E-02	-8.35E-02	.819	-.121	.179	4.711E-02
When you work in the LLC, you	7.405E-02	.189	-7.40E-02	-2.39E-02	-7.54E-02	.803	5.167E-04	-.118
How much previous experience did you have with working in a Language Learning Centre like ours, before you started on this course ?	-8.41E-02	-5.87E-03	-8.40E-02	-7.40E-02	8.751E-02	-.148	.843	-8.14E-04
How useful did you find the writing materials ?	.394	9.400E-02	.119	.143	.124	.233	.719	5.220E-02
How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC ?	3.486E-02	-.141	8.237E-02	.132	2.582E-02	-.236	8.594E-02	.831
How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?	7.860E-02	.417	5.503E-02	.298	3.693E-02	-.319	.155	-.551

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Not surprisingly five of the questions relating to the usefulness of the materials in some way relate to each other. They are 'how useful did you find the... Grammar books & exercises, Vocabulary books & exercises, Dictionaries, Audio tapes and Video tapes'. We performed a reliability analysis to see if these questions behaved in the same way. The analysis gave a Cronbach Alpha measure for reliablity of .8326. It is therefore safe to say that these questions measure an underlying construct, perhaps one that could be called 'utilities'.

The second component in the matrix grouped together 'How useful did you find the listening materials?' , 'How often did you use the Language Centre (LLC) during the summer course?' , 'Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future? 'and 'How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?'. Two other questions, 'How useful did you find the computers?' and 'How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?' also scored high on this component, but also on other components. We therefore excluded them from this group. The reliability analysis gave a Cronbach Alpha of .6307. The underlying construct of this component could probably be called 'perceived usefulness'.

The third component contained three more questions relating to perceived usefulness of materials. They were : 'how useful did you find the....graded readers with cassettes, the graded readers and the other reading materials'. All of these related to reading and the underlying construct could perhaps be called just that. The Cronbach Alpha for this was .7836

In the next component we find three questions : 'Do you think it is important in a course like this to learn how to learn English by yourself?' , 'How important for you is the work you do in the LLC for learning English ?' and 'How often do you use English outside Victoria University?'. They scored reasonably high with .851 , .734 and .566 respectively. Moreover, these questions did not overlap with any of the other components. The Cronbach Alpha was .4564. The importance of learning to learn English and the use of English outside the classroom were correlated. The more people use English by themselves, the more important they find it to learn how to learn (or vice versa). Also the importance that students attribute to learning to learn is related to how important the SAC was for them to learn English. This is interesting for there is no relationship between how often students use English outside the university and how important learning in the SAC is for them. Students who find their learning in the SAC more important (and therefore use it more, see paragraph 5.1), do not necessarily use English more. However, both the students who use English more and those who find the SAC more important for their learning, find learning to learn important. So it is possible for students with different orientations to learning to agree with the importance of learning to learn. This is an interesting construct because it seems to be related to learner autonomy. The fact that this construct is independent of different approaches to learning seems to strengthen that impression.

In the next four groups there are no clear patterns anymore.

Chapter 6 : Conclusion

6.1 What are students' perceptions of the usefulness of SALL ?

The SAC at VUW has a large number of regular users. On the whole they were very positive about the resources, as shown by the interviews and the questionnaire. Almost 90 % of the students rated the SAC as useful for learning English, although we have no evidence to show us if it made them learn better or faster. This is approximately the same percentage as Farmer (1994) had found, and a little lower than Gardner & Miller's 84 % (1997). These and the following findings are probably not 'coloured' in the sense that few students had previous experience of working in a SAC.

Also a large number of students (80 %) found the SAC useful for learning to learn. This is more than Farmer (1994) had found (31 %). Richards (1999), however, also reported positive attitudes. However students did not mention this as an advantage of SALL when not asked explicitly, which is in accordance

with what Gremmo (1988) found. It could be that students do not have a strong interest in this aspect of SALL, as Gardner (2000, private communication) reports about findings from a study in Hong Kong. The higher value that regular users of the self-access resources attribute to them for learning to learn is probably a result of their work, rather than of any preconceptions about it. Students' satisfaction depended partly on the degree of difficulty they had in finding the right materials. The more difficult they found it, the less useful they found the SAC in terms of helping them to become more independent learners. Star (1994) found that less proficient students found it more difficult to work in the SAC. We found something similar, for more proficient students had fewer problems in finding appropriate resources. The correlation was weak however.

Fostering independent learning was found to be an important goal in a course such as the EPP by 93 % of the respondents. During the interviews a number of students said they felt the course had helped them to develop the necessary skills for this. Reasons they gave were the need to continue to study after the course and a realisation that a teacher cannot teach all one needs. An additional advantage that students mentioned was that it allows them to study what and when they want to. Other findings from the interviews partly contradicted this, for several students said they did not see independent learning as useful. Those who used English more were more positive about independent learning. Perhaps their language needs were too complex and diverse to be met in the course, which would make additional independent study more important to them. This seems to correspond with findings by Fernandez-Toro (1996) that self-instruction works better for more advanced students. We found that they use other resources more but do not see the SAC as a great help. Those who do see the SAC as helpful for learning English also find learning to learn more important. There seem to be different modes of learning that lead to an appreciation of the development of independent learning skills.

Perceptions of usefulness were influenced by the (perceived) quality of the introduction, which is also what Richards (1999) found. On-going support was identified as a crucial factor by Star (1994) and Richards (1999). We also found that the additonal support in the form of a helper in the SAC, was influential.

Finally, an nteresting finding was that it is probably difficult to influence learners' perceptions of the usefulness of SALL by directing them to the SAC.

6.2 What do students understand by learner autonomy and SALL ?

There is little previous research with which to compare our findings. However, results quite strongly indicate that students have a shallow awareness of what independent learning entails. Also, their understanding of the function of the SAC was limited. There was a contradiction between findings from the questionnaire and the interviews. 93 % of the students found learning to learn an important goal of the EPP and found the SAC helpful in this respect. In terms of our model as presented in paragraph 1.9 then, learners do seem to be willing to take responsibility for their learning. On the other hand, the interviews revealed that a number of students found class-work to be the most important source for their learning. This means that some students found independent learning to be important, but obviously this did not mean to them learning without a teacher. This seems to be in line with what Farmer (1994) found : 80 % of the respondents to his questionnaire said it was important to them that there be a teacher present while working in the SAC. It is also in accordance with findings by Broady (1996) that students prefer teacher explanations, even when accepting responsibility for their learning.

Students who found independent learning to be beneficial often seemed to have misunderstood its meaning. When asked in what ways independent learning was fostered in the course, many students referred to things the teacher had shown them. The source of direction remained with the teacher. Few students indicated that they now felt more able to initiate or plan their learning, or that the course had required them to do so. With reference to our model these students obviously (felt they) lacked the knowledge and skills required for independent learning. Also when asked to specify what it was that the teacher showed them, students only mentioned strategies for learning, all of them within the cognitive domain. None of them mentioned metacognitive strategies, such as planning or monitoring progress. In that sense, students seem to feel that learning to learn is a set of techniques that a teacher teaches them.

In terms of the model students are perhaps not enough consciously involved to engage in the metacognitive aspects of their learning. This is similar to what Aston (1996) found. When checked against Sinclair's (1999) criteria, there seemed to be very little metacognitive awareness of what independent learning is.

Resources that are aimed at developing learners' awareness and helping learners to develop their independent learning skills were not valued highly by the students. The Self-Access Guides were not popular and the Independent Learning Record Booklet was seldomly used.

Students probably don't see being able to locate appropriate resources as a skill related to, or important for independent learning. Most students indicated having problems in finding materials (lacking, with regard to the model, the necessary skills), while at the same time claiming that working in the SAC had made them more independent learners. However, selecting materials is an essential skill in independent learning. Likewise, when asked an open question about what problems they encountered while working in the SAC, students mentioned only practical problems with particular resources. None of them talked about difficulties in self-assessing, planning etc. It seemed as if the SAC was not seen as a place for developing learner independence. More proficient students especially see the SAC merely as a collection of resources they don't need because they have the skills to find other resources. Broady's (1996) findings were similar in showing that although students claim to accept responsibility for their learning they do not feel confident in essential aspects of independent learning such as self-monitoring and self-assessment.

Since the number of students who claimed not to have used English much outside the university is so high, it could be said that the SAC did not fulfill it's 'bridge' potential (Gardner & Miller 1999). It obviously did not help in linking the class and the outside world. Lower proficiency students worked more in the SAC and used other resources less. Perhaps the SAC keeps learners inside, by providing a non-threatening and too comfortable environment. The potential of the SAC has probably not been employed in the sense that although most students used the resources regularly, this has not resulted in an increased awareness of what independent learning is, and one fears, of their independent learning skills.

6.3 Which factors enhance or inhibit SALL ?

The findings above identified factors that influence the success of a SAC. There is a need for increased awareness among students, both about what independent learning is and about the true potential of the SAC, particularly in forming a bridge to the outside world. More proficient students in particular did not seem to find the resources very helpful. In general, it will be the teachers' responsibility to foster the links between the classroom and the SAC, more than is currently being done. This is also indicated by the fact that the main impediment to learning in the SAC that students mention is a lack of time. There is obviously not, or students do not experience, a strong integration of SALL into the curriculum as it stands. This was also found by Fernandez-Toro (1996) and Gremmo (1988).

An important obstacle seems to be the difficulty students have in finding the right resources (see also Star 1994). This could indicate that the preparation and training of the EPP provides is insufficient. Support was found to be a crucial factor by Richards (1999) and Star (1994), and we also found it to be important. The same can be said for the introduction. Richards (1999) found this to be important and Gardner & Miller (1997, 1999) suspect it was the main cause for their students' satisfaction with SALL.

The resources did seem to be motivating for students, even if they were not used to their full potential. The listening materials and the computers especially seem to have high face validity for the students and they are probably a good way of gettting students to use the materials.

One of the advantages of the SAC is that it gives its users the opportunity to work in a quiet atmosphere, with a large number of resources. Many students do not have this opportunity at home or can not afford some of the materials and reported being very content with the self-access resources for these reasons. Others mentioned that they found it a friendly place with helpful staff and therefore liked to come there. From the observations made by the author it was also clear that students saw it as good place to meet

other students to study together or just to chat. It was certainly not only individual study that took place in the SAC. In short, students do seem to benefit from the resources, even if only for practical reasons.

Finally, we did not find any evidence that cultural factors played a role in the appreciation or lack thereof of the resources. Some students did indicate that they were not used to SALL because such resources were unavailable to them in their own country. However, none of them said they felt uncomfortable with this mode of learning.

6.4 Key issues

From this study the following key issues emerge needed for the successful implementation of SALL :

- Integration : SALL needs to be integrated into an existing curriculum. Students need to feel it is an important part of a course and that they have time for it.
- Awareness : students need to realise what independent learning is and how SALL can be of benefit.
- Training and Support: there is a strong need for extensive training in independent learning as well as for on-going support.
- Bridging : classroom learning needs to be linked to the outside world. The SAC could provide function as a bridge, preparing learners for authentic language use.

6.5 Practical implications

The following are some practical implications of the study for the implementation of SALL. These relate to the key issues mentioned above.

- provide a thorough introduction to the resources
- provide on-going (human) support
- the person providing this support has to have certain characteristics, most important of which are approachability, opennes, a genuine interest in learners' problems, interest in language learning and friendliness.
- make materials easier to find. Perhaps use easier language.
- clearly integrate self-access time into the curriculum.
- relate classroom learning to self-access learning
- make people use English more outside classroom. Link the classroom more with the outside world, perhaps using the SAC as a bridge.
- raise students' awareness of what independent learning entails. This could perhaps be in the form of a short course, including training in the use of the self-access resources.
- inform more proficient language learners on the advantages of SALL.

6.6 Future research

Following are some recommendations for future research. This study provided a clearer picture in some respects. However, several issues are still unresolved.

The study clearly indicated that students are very positive about the resources. They are highly appreciated for contributing to learning gains. However, it is unclear if learning gains can be attributed to SALL. Other, perhaps experimental research, has to provide more information on this point. It is also unclear if students felt that SALL had helped to learn more or better or things they were more interested in or were relevant to them. Although the interviews gave us the impression that it was mainly for the latter reasons that students were so positive about the resources, future research will have to provide more precise information.

The study also indicated that students were very positive about the resources for the development of their independent learning skills. However, as we have shown, these perceptions were based on a very shallow awareness of what independent learning entails. Other forms of assessing the contribution of SALL to the development of independent learning skills have to be used.

One finding of the research was that students do not use English very much outside the university. The question why this is so remains unsolved. Some suggestions have been made for the implementation of SALL that will hopefully lead to more active language learning by the students. However, future research will have prove if these measures are successful.

An interesting question to explore further is whether the learners' positive attitude to SALL was matched by those of their teachers. Findings from the evaluation report (Reinders 2000) about the SAC at VUW included notes from an audiotaped teacher discussion about the self-access resources and the role of SALL in the EPP. These suggested that not all staff members were committed to spending time talking about or making links to learners' out of class learning, other than in the form of teacher-directed activities. However, more research on this topic is needed. This is important, for this study has shown that for a number of students the links between classroom learning and SALL are not very strong.

This study found a correlation between students' use of resources other than the self-access resources and students' use of English outside the university. There could be a causal relationship between these two which would mean that if students could be made to use other resources more, they would then also start to use English more frequently. The use of these resources of course requires the use of English, but the interaction with authentic materials could stimulate students to use English in more situations. This needs to be further explored.

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Following are a few links to resources on the web about Learner Autonomy and / or Self-Access Language Learning.

The AILA Scientific Commission on Learner Autonomy : provides news about AILA activities, research in this field, as well as a number of links to other resources.
http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/div1/ailasc/

Auto-L mailinglist : a mailinglist about Learner Autonomy that covers a different topic usually every month. These topics range from self-assessment to the production of self-access materials. To subscribe to the list, send an email to Anita Wenden with in the subject line : 'AUTO-L request' and in the body of the message:
Subscribe AUTO-L
Your name
Your institutional affiliation
Your e-mail address
Send this message to :
Wldyc@cunyvm.cuny.edu

Learner independence SIG : The LI SIG was created in 1986 as a forum for anyone interested in issues of independence, autonomy and interdependence in learning.
www.iatefl.org/lisig/lihome.htm

SACSIG mailinglist : a New Zealand-based network of teachers, managers and researchers in Self-Access Centres across the country. This list is maintained by John-Jones Parry from Manukau University. Send messages to:
sacsig@zebedee.manukau.ac.nz

Open learning: This is a site of the Languages Institute of the University of Hull. It includes links to the Open Learning Centre, PLAN (Professional Language Advisers' Network) and to SMILE (Strategies for Managing an Independent Learning Environment) projects.
www.hull.ac.uk/langinst/open.htm

Appendices

Appendix A Floor plan of the LLC

Appenidx B Floor plan of the SAC

Appendix C Country of origin of the students in the EPP

Country of Origin	Number of students		Country of Origin	Number of students
Cambodia	19		Mongolia	8
China	23		Myanmar	3
Colombia	1		Norway	1
Costa Rica	1		Russia	3
Finland	1		Somalia	1
France	1		Slovak Republic	1
Indonesia	3		Sri Lanka	3
Japan	12		Taiwan	3
Jordan	1		Thailand	8
Kiribati	1		Tuvalu	1
Korea	13		Vanuatu	2
Laos	15		Vietnam	26
Malaysia	2			
Mongolia				

Appendix D : Project description

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

Wellington Autonomy Project

The Wellington Autonomy Project is the name given to a number of research projects undertaken by staff members of Victoria University's School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies and Language Learning Centre. The staff members involved are David Crabbe, Sara Cotterall and Alison Hoffmann. The aim of the research is to better understand the problems which language learners face, the action they take in order to solve their problems and the beliefs about language learning which underpin their learning. We hope to use the information we gather to improve the quality of the language learning experience at Victoria University.

One of our projects in 1999 involves interviewing Victoria University English language students in order to discuss their use of independent language learning resources and their views on the usefulness of the materials. We will do this by arranging interviews and discussions (focus groups) with students enrolled on ELIN 933 (English Proficiency Course) and by asking course members to complete a number of questionnaires. This project will be undertaken by Sara Cotterall with Hayo Reinders as research assistant.

We would like to invite you to participate in this research by allowing us to make a tape recording of interviews you have with the research assistant, and to transcribe part or all of your discussion. However you are under no obligation to participate. If you prefer not to, your discussion with the research assistant will not be recorded. It is intended that the collated, analysed data will be the basis for a conference paper and report in an international publication.

If you agree to participate, you can be sure that your name will not appear in any reports of the data, and that all the recorded material will be destroyed at the end of the project.

The Wellington Autonomy Project researchers are:
David Crabbe (Head of School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies)
Sara Cotterall (Senior Lecturer, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies)
Alison Hoffmann (Manager, Language Learning Centre)

Appendix E Consent form

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES
Consent to Participate in Research
Project: The Use of Independent Language Learning Resources by VUW English Proficiency Programme Students

I have been given and have understood an explanation of the research project.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers .

I understand that:

- I do not have to take part, and that I will not suffer in any way if I decide not to take part.
- I may withdraw myself from this project or any information that I have provided without having to give reasons.
- the information I give will be used to help language learners improve their language learning skills.
- my name will not appear in any reports of the data.
- I may discuss the findings of the research with the researchers at any time.
- the data collected will be destroyed at the end of the project.

I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to be informed of the outcome of the project, and have supplied my address below.

Date:

Signed:

Name of participant:
(please print clearly)

Years spent learning
English :

Permanent Address:

Appendix F The questionnaire

English Language Institute

English Proficiency Programme

Dear Students,
This questionnaire is to find out what you think about the English language materals and facilities in the Language Learning Centre and about how you use them. This information will help us to improve the centre in the future. Thank you for helping us.

Classnumber.....

1. How often did you use the Language Centre (LLC) during the summer course?
   - usually more than twice a week ☐
   - usually once or twice a week ☐
   - a few times ☐
   - never ☐

2. If you have never (or rarely) used the LLC, could you tell us why?

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3. How useful do you think that working in the LLC is, to learn English?
   very useful ... not at all useful
   5 4 3 2 1

4. What (if anything) did you find particularly useful about the LLC ?

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5. Which materials did you often use in the LLC ?
   How useful did you find them? (please rate all of them)

		Very useful			didn't use		Not at all useful	
Graded readers	☐	5	4	3	2	1		
Graded readers with cassettes	☐		5	4	3	2	1	
Other reading materials	☐		5	4	3	2	1	
Dictionaries		☐		5	4	3	2	1
Grammar books & exercises	☐		5	4	3	2	1	
Vocabulary books & exercises	☐		5	4	3	2	1	
Listening materials		☐		5	4	3	2	1
Writing materials		☐		5	4	3	2	1
SAC guides		☐		5	4	3	2	1
Computer programmes	☐		5	4	3	2	1	
Satellite TV		☐		5	4	3	2	1
Audio tapes		☐		5	4	3	2	1
Video tapes		☐		5	4	3	2	1

6. What other materials would you like us to provide in the LLC ?

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7. What materials would you like to have more examples / copies of ?

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8. When you work in the LLC, you

- ☐ Mostly do things your teacher told you to do
- ☐ Mostly do things you decided to do yourself

9. What is the most difficult thing for you about working in the LLC ?

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10. Did you make use of other resources such as the University Library, or the Public Library?

☐ yes, often ☐ sometimes ☐ no, never

11. How useful did you find the introduction to the LLC ?

very useful not at all useful

5 4 3 2 1

12. How helpful was it that there was someone in the Self-Access Centre to help and give advice ?

very helpful not at all helpful

5 4 3 2 1

13. How often do you use English outside Victoria University ?

☐ very often ☐ reasonably often ☐ sometimes ☐ hardly ever

14. How difficult was it for you to find the right materials in the LLC?

very difficult not at all difficult

5 4 3 2 1

15. How much previous experience did you have with working in a Language Learning Centre like ours, before you started on this course?

☐ very much ☐ a little ☐ none

16. Do you think that working in the LLC has helped you to learn how to learn English by yourself, in the future?

☐ yes, absolutely ☐ a little ☐ no ☐ I don't know

17. Do you think it is important that in a course like this to learn how to learn English by yourself?

☐ yes, very important ☐ quite important ☐ no, not important ☐ I don't know

18. How important for you is the work you do in the LLC for learning English ?

☐ very important ☐ quite important ☐ not important ☐ I don't know

19. Do you have any suggestions that could help us improve the LLC ?

Appendix G Interviews

Interview 1	*Class 8*
What do you do in the LLC ?	In the first course I did a lot of work in the SAC about grammar, writing, vocabulary. This course it's quite busy. We have to focus on our topics (politics). I don't go as often as before. But I try to go on.
Which grammar book do you use ?	'Grammar in Use' and Swain.
Do you use vocabulary lists ?	The last course I did, now I use Cobuild and Language Activator (that's very useful).
Do you use computers ?	Mostly in main libraries, sometimes here. I use the cdrom with the celebrities. It's very interesting.
What is it you like about the computer ?	By hearing and seeing at the same time. Wordprocessing is good for the spelcheckers.
When you work out-of class, do you mainly do things your teacher told you to do, or things you decided to do yourself ?	In the first course our teacher pointed us to it, now we go by ourselves. The teachers shows some new books etc.
Which is more important, the work in class or the work you do by yourself ?	The teacher is very important, but class is not enough, it's limited, so he can't explain everything.
Do you like to study by yourself ?	Yes, because I know what I want to do and focus on that.
Are you good at learning by yourself ?	I'm not sure. Sometimes I need the teacher's help.
How does he help you to learn by yourself ?	I had problems with pronunciation, he points me to resources, shows me what I should focus on. The teacher knows what's right and wrong in my language.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	Yes, he (the teacher) shows how to learn vocabulary. For pronunciation I record my voice and he corrects it, I sometimes do it myself.
Do you use your ILRC ?	Not usually, I'm too lazy. I like it though, I think it's useful. It's very busy.
Any other ways you learn English ?	With Kiwi friends, by watching TV, listening to the radio, reading newspapers, also for the news-log assignments.
What's your opinion about the LLC ?	Very useful materials, some people are too lazy though, me too. I don't take advantage of it.
Do you have any suggestions ?	Display books more openly on the shelves, some people are shy, don't ask for help. Use boxes (separate spaces) for more privacy.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	Yes, expecially in the first course. I felt confused what's the right material, now it's easier, I ask people. I also know better what I need. It takes time.

Interview 2 (with 2 students)	Class 1
What do you do in the SAC ?	1: graded readers with cassettes, special of the week, cassettes 2. I haven't used it very much. I want to , though.
Which is the most important part of your learning, school, LLC or other ?	1: LLC is very important. Especially because I feel that I can work on my weaknesses more than in class.
What's your opinion about the LLC ?	1: It's very good, cozy place, there are many resources. Both: it's a very quiet place, home is too busy.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English, do you think that is good ?	2: to learn a language you need to be ready for it, pay attention. You can learn all day, even when you're waiting for the bus. Other students don't seem to do that very much.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	1. Yes, very much. Our teacher always tells us to keep focussed, to keep 'our radar on'.
But then you woulden't need the LLC ?	1: you need it to find answers to questions you

	have, especially about grammar.
What do you think about there being someone in the LLC to help you ?	Both: it's very good, easy to ask, it makes it more friendly.
Do you find it difficult to work in the LLC, to find the right materials ?	1 : a little bit. It takes time to find the right materials
Do you have any suggestions ?	Both: no Macintosh computers. More people would come to the LLC if they could more easily read email etc. The special of the week is very good.

Interview 3	*Class 7*
What do you do in the LLC ?	Grammar cdrom, tapes to record voice. I don't use the materials in the SAC a lot. I watch news, read newspaper at home. I do here what I can't do at home.
What's your opinion about the resources?	I'm not so familiar with them. I rent books from the public library, unsimplified. Speaking and grammar, is my problem. I can understand well and reading is also ok. I never used grammar books. Maybe later. It's hard to find out what is useful to you. Sometimes it's very different from what you thought it was from the description.
What's the most important part of your learning ?	I prefer the classroom. Lots of speaking.
What other ways do you use to develop your English ?	Meet locals, 'I am lucky to have patient friends'.
How important is what you do yourself compared with what you do in class ?	I'm too lazy, I could do much more. During this course I've realised only I can learn my English, still I'm lazy though. It's much more easy to do what the teacher says and just listen. Figuring it out yourself is much harder.
But is there an advantage as well ?	You can study the things you really want to know. Classroom subjects are interesting but not related to for example my work.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	Yes, very much. This is the first time that I realise it's up to me, I have to make plans. I've learned English 20 years or so.
How ?	Teacher is not the answer, but just shows the way you have to go. You have to find solutions yourself (teacher doesn't give you the right answer straight away). It's better.
Why is it better ?	In Finland everything had to be perfect, I didn't dare to open my mouth. Here it is very different. It is the first time I can write down what I want, even if I make horrible mistakes, it's okay. I always got a lot of red marks. That made me desperate.
Do you think it's difficult to use a LLC ?	Yes, you have to do a lot of work to find the right thing.
How could it be made easier ?	The colour codes are good, but I don't know, you just have to put in an effort.
Do we need anything else in the LLC ?	There are many materials, it's good.
Does your teacher point you to the LLC ?	Yes, all the time, it's also in our timetable.
Do you like English ?	In english you have so many synonyms. It's difficult. I like British English.

Interview 4	*Class 4*
What do you do in the LLC ?	Dictation mainly as preparation for IELTS test. That is a problem because I have the course and the

	preparation for the test, so I don't have a lot of time to do other things in the LLC.
What materials do you use ?	Mainly computers.
Why ?	I like computers, you can see it at the same time. I use tapes sometimes.
Any other ways you try to learn ?	I really want to, tried to join a soccer club with Kiwis but I don't have time.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	Mostly it's okay, but sometimes I need to try different materials. I continue using those then.
One of the goals is developing learner independence. Do you experience this in your class?	Yes, it's a lot more open than in my country. The teacher shows you the way more than tells you what to do. I feel that I do most of the work by myself. In class you're just showed how to do it after which you go and really work.
Do you find that difficult ?	A little bit, because I don't have any experience in it.
Do you think it's useful ?	Yes, it's good. But now I have to study for the IELTS test and I think learning this way takes more time. Now I just need to pass the test.
So you think that now it would be better if your teacher were a little more directing ?	Yes. I'd also like her to be a little bit more in control of the class. She sometimes doesn't have a lot of confidence.
Do you use your ILRC ?	No, sometimes I think I know the way, some ideas are good, but different people work in different ways. I make plans for myself. I just skim it.
Do you think you are good at learning by yourself ?	I can do it, but sometimes, because of my different educational background I don't know how to do it. I need the teacher to show me how to do it, to show me where to start. Before I never went to the library to find information. My English is very poor so it's difficult.
Do you have any suggestions ?	The LLC closes too early, but it's a good place for practice listening. The computers are very slow.
Do you prefer pc or mac ?	Pc. It is more modern, easier, Apple will disappear.

Interview 5	*Class 2*
What do you work on in the LLC ?	Watching TV, I used to do videos also, but this is the second course, now I don't take notes, just watch. Sometimes I use cassettes, with textbook. Pronunciation.
Why not computers ?	They're too easy.
Why don't you use the SAC ?	Too full, uncomfortable.
When you work out-of class, do you mainly do things your teacher told you to do, or things you decided to do yourself ?	Both.
How important is the work you do in class compared to what you do yourself ?	The teacher tells us how to study, we should bring those skills to after class and work by ourselves. They're just instructing. Most of the studying I do outside the class.
Is that a good way you think ?	Yes.
Is that different than what you were used to ?	The first three months were different, now it's more advanced and this teacher is more confident.
Do you feel your teacher shows you how to learn by yourself ?	She mentions it a little bit in class, but she thinks we know it ourselves.
Does she refer you to the LLC ?	Not really.
In what other ways do you try to develop your English ?	Reading, newspapers and stories, books from public library. My vocabulary is weak, though. I try to look them up and make a list and put that on the wall. I make a list every week.
How do you review the older lists ?	When I clean my room…
One of the goals of the course is to teach	Because it's my second time I know better what to do, and

students to become more independent. Do you experience that?	understand what the teacher means, but I'm not sure other students can.
Do you feel confident about studying English after the course finishes ?	Not confident, I still need help, especially for writing. I need someone to tell me if it's right or wrong , also for listening.
Do you use the ILRC ?	I haven't opened it. I found out how I should study.
What's your opinion about the LLC?	It's almost perfect.

Interview 6	*Class 6*
What were you working on?	'Issues in English' (dictation, listening). It is useful but difficult (the content). I used it because of Irina's recommendation. I think that it is very useful to be able to read and listen at the same time and it is interesting. 'Time passes easily'. It is useful because there are a lot of popular topics.
How long did you work with it?	For four days, two hours per day.
How do you use it ?	First I listen, then I look up new words, I do dictation, do exercises and listen again. There is not much software, only one copy.
Why do you need listening skills ?	Living in NZ : it is different from British.
Which other materials did you use ?	I used tapes, advanced vocabulary. It was good, but I prefer computers, I can use the eye, like in reality. I would like to record my voice on the computer and compare my pronunciation.
How do you remember new information ?	I review when I come back, write down new words. No flashcards 'I'm lazy'.
Do you use your new knowledge in real life ?	I don't have a lot of contact with Kiwis, I've only been here a short time.
Have you learned better to learn by yourself in this course ?	Teachers show me how to study here. How to learn when the course finishes. I would like to come back next year when I'm studying to use the LLC. Maybe I'll do summer course
In what ways has this course helped you to know how to learn a language ?	By learning new words. Using flashcards, using the whole sentence, using dictionaries. Using simplified novels.
Do you like English ?	It is difficult to learn, I have no confidence because no conversation, the more I learn the more I know what I don't know. It's a beautiful language, I like the sound.

Interview 7	*Class 8*
What do you do in the LLC ?	Wordprocessing, email, listening (videos), grammar rom (I like it very much, it's very useful).
Why do you like to work with the computers to learn English ?	I'm used to working with computers, I like it.
When you work out-of class, do you mainly do things your teacher told you to do, or things you decided to do yourself ?	At first our teacher asked me to do certain things, I did and enjoyed it.
Are they problems your teacher mentioned you have or did you notice yourself ?	I notice myself. Writing is a problem, so I email a lot. We (in our class) send a lot of emails to each other, because this way we have more privacy.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what u do by urself ?	What we do by ourselves, the biggest improvement I got was from out class.
How ?	By talking with friends, by being in an English-speaking country. But of course in class we get a lot of basic examples, I practice it outside the class.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	Yes, I enjoy our course very much, because we get a lot of knowledge how to learn English. Our teacher gave us

	homework to listen to the news every day, tells us to read.
Does your teacher show you how to learn by yourself ?	Yes. They show us how to paraphrase, how to write, how to connect topics, they give a lot of examples.
Do u think that after this you are able to study by yourrself without a teacher ?	Yes, thanks to this course.
Was it different how they taught you in your home country ?	I coulden't use English, there was no challenge.
Do u use the ILRC ?	The what ? Oh, no. I don't plan my learning, I just do it. It's not useful for me.
What's your opinion about the LLC ?	Very good. But the problem is the kind of computers. Why not IBM, why MAC's ? Also it's open only until 5 o'clock. So sometimes I write my things in the LLC on Mac and can't continue in the library. The materials are very good.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials?	No.

Interview 8	*Class 6*
What do you do in the llc ?	Listening, cassettes with books, but it's difficult, I have to listen 3 or 4 times, because I want to use the ones with the right topic for me. It's useful though.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	The class provides the context, I can practice speaking and listening. In the LLC I do other things, like vocabulary. Both are important though.
Do you like to work by yourself ?	Yes.
Is that a good way for you ?	Yes, I can do what I want and also the topic I want.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	Yes, we didn't have resources like these at home.
Do you find it more easy now than in the beginning ?	Yes.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	When we write essays, the teachers gives examples. The teacher suggests topics, resources we can use, sends us to library. If find that very useful.
Does the teacher refer to the LLC ?	Of course !
Will you be able to study English by yourself after the course ?	Yes.
Were you able before the course ?	I don't know, now I am.
What helped you ?	The teaching materials. That's a problem for me when I go back to my country.
Do you use the ILRC ?	It is useful, but difficult. Sometimes without the teacher I can't understand how to do it.
Do you find it difficult to plan ?	Yes.
Do you think planning is useful ?	Yes, everyone has to do planning. It's necessary.
What's your opinion about the LLC ?	Very good, no suggestions, very friendly.
Do you use the computers ?	For grammar. I like the 'Grammar Rom', I think it's funny. It's useful. I also did academic reading, but I find it very difficult.
Do you like to learn with the computer ?	Yes, I like to hear it.

Interview 9	*Class 1*
How often do you use the LLC ?	Sometimes.
What do you do ?	Listening and the BBC news, audiocassettes and pronunciation. Computers only for email. I will try pronunciation.
Are the resources useful ?	Yes, there is a wide variety.
So why don't you use it very often ?	Because of a lack of time.

What other ways do you use tolearn English ?	Native speakers, telephone, movies. I also listen to answer machines. Read books.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	It's hard to say, in class is very important. It gives me guidelines for my study and some necessary practice. But if I recognise areas I need to practice I do everything to work on that.
What do you mean by guidelines ?	The teacher shows techniques (how to do speedreading etc).
Does your teacher show you how to learn by yourself ?	Implicitly, I can draw a lesson from it.
Do you feel confident about learning by yourself after the course ?	Yes.
Were you before the course ?	Yes, but now I know better how to do it. I didn't know where to start etc, I was confused. Some things you need a teacher for, like writing.
Do you use the ILRC ?	I Don't know what that is.
Do you have any suggestions ?	No.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	No.
Is it important that students become more independent learners ?	They cannot always have a teacher. If you rely on the teacher totally you can't improve unless you have confidence and independence.

Interview 10	*Class 1*
What do you do in the LLC ?	I use grammar books, graded readers, computers (grammar and reading). The 'Grammar Rom' is nice. The reading programme on the computer, I don't like it very much, because the structure is quite difficult. Cassette tapes I find confusing because the description doesn't always match the content. Especially because some chapters are being skipped on the tape.
Do you like to learn with the Computers ?	It's easy to understand. It's less of an effort than reading a book.
Is it better than a book ?	Not really, because books are more detailed. It's better, but takes more time.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	Equal. The class is very important, because we really need to understand. But outside the class is also important because I need to improve. Sometimes I don't understand the teacher, so I must work hard by myself and prepare.
Do you like to work by yourself ? Are you good at it ?	Yes. I need someone to advise, say what my weaknesses are.
When you work by yourself, do you mainly do things your teacher told you to do, or things you decided to do yourself ?	Both. Our teacher often advises us to use certain books.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	Yes, for example the use of graded readers. I think that's useful because it's nicer to read not too difficult books. I'm improving.
Do you think that you'll be able after the course to study by yourself ? Do you feel confident to do that without the help of a teacher ?	I'll keep going there. Yes, but I'll ask people to help me
Are you now more able to work by yourself than before the course ?	I have more confidence.
What helped you in developing this confidence ?	The whole course. I must improve because I need to communicate with the other students. It's good for my

	motivation. At first other students didn't want to work with me because my English was too bad.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	No, because of the catalogue etc
Do you use the ILRC ?	Sometimes I use it. It's useful.
Do you have any suggestions ?	More copies of some books like 'English Grammar in Use'. The SAC room doesn't have natural light, the room is small, is sometimes noisy and the air is bad.

Interview 11	*Class 1*
What do you do in the LLC ?	I use the morning report (very useful), the pronunciation programme on the computer (is helpful).
Do you like to learn with the computer ?	I use the computer every day, it has a spoken dictionary.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	The classroom, I don't have a lot of time after class, I try to write letters to our teacher, I try to talk with classmates after class.
Are there any other ways you try to learn ?	I don't have time to watch TV or listen to the radio, that's why I use the morning report. I read English books, and talk to Kiwi friends.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	Yes, fortunately I read the booklet by Sara 'How to learn autonomously'. After that I can understand what the philosophy is that the class is based on. Every time I join the classwork I think about that. During this course I learn English, also I have some idea how can I teach English to the Korean people. I get lots of ideas from the classroom.
Is it a good philosophy ?	Yes, I agree with my teacher, but if I didn't have the chance to read the booklet, maybe I don't understand the philosophy and maybe my learning would be more limited.
Do you think it's useful to give this article to other students ?	I'm not sure. The article was interesting to me, I'm not sure if other students are interested in it.
Do you think students have to know about this philosophy, to benefit from it ?	I think it would be a benefit. Also the language learning theme was useful. I think that the information about the philosophy should be added to that.
How do you notice in class that the teacher is trying to develop learner autonomy ?	Because the time is limited our teacher mentions is sometimes. I think the teacher and the language learner should understand each other.
Is it important to develop in learners a sense of autonomy ?	I think so, because I will teach the Korean people to study by themselves, so for me it's very good, after this course I have to learn by myself.
Do you know better now how to learn by yourself ?	Yes, before this course I didn't realise about that, so now I understand that independent learning is very important and I concentrated on my independent learning. After realising that my English improves more.
Do you ever use the ILRC ?	I used it in the first course. I have my own system of note-taking and managing new vocabulary. I don't need it.
What's your opinion on the resources in the LLC ?	The materials are good, I always use the computer so I hope that the LLC will have more programmes.
Have you ever used any of the other programmes ?	The 'Grammar Rom', but the information is limited. I would like to see encyclopaedias (e.g. Encyclopaedia Britannica), more information ('Like databases, archives etc ?) Yes.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	No, I can find materials easily.

Interview 12	*Class 1*

How often do you use the LLC ?	About twice a week.
What materials do you use ?	Dictionaries, audiocassettes (business), is useful. Some pronunciation.
You don't use the computers ?	Just once, I still don't understand the difference betweeen these computers. I don't know exactly how to use them.
When you work by yourself, do you mainly do things your teacher told you to do, or things you decided to do yourself ?	Half-half.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	To follow the teacher is the best way, I think. It's useful for me to improve my English, the teacher teaches you step by step, the teacher knows what you need, what your weakness is. You must finish the homework first and then do your own things , you own practice.
Part of this course is teaching students how to learn by themselves. Do you think that's useful ?	I don't think so, not useful for me at the moment. If I don't do another course after this one, perhaps I have not the motivation to learn by myself.
You need a course, then?	Yes, even though the teacher teaches how to learn by ourselves, but I don't think I can do that after the course.
Do you think there's an advantage in learning by yourself?	There is, the teacher showed how to use the LLC, how to read articles, to use strategies, sometimes I will learn by myself, it's useful, now when I read a newspaper I use the method the teacher taught us. So in some ways it's useful.
Do you ever use the ILRC ?	I don't know it, the teacher told us, but I forgot it.
If you had to, would you feel confident about learning by yourself ?	Not very confident.
Do you have any suggestions?	Nothing. I don't know it (the LLC) very well.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	Not yet, I don't use it very often.
Do you think an LLC like this is useful? In what ways?	Yes, it's useful for listening skills. I can find everything here, I haven't done that yet. I don't have the time, I would like to.

Interview 13	*Class 1*
How often do you use the LLC ?	Once or twice a week.
What materials do you use ?	Dictionaries, vocabulary materials and listening. It's quite useful.
Do you use the computers ?	Not really, the first time the software was quite complicated, didn't have listening practice. That's why I chose audiocassettes. It was the grammar cdrom. It was difficult to understand the structure.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	Class is more important, the teacher can follow-up. Non-classwork we do in spare time. Self-learning I don't feel the significance of the progress.
So you find it difficult to see your improvement ?	That's right, and sometimes, when we encounter a problem, we ignore it, we don't ask people to clarify it. In class the teacher would make us understand. But if we do similar things here to what we do in class, than it's good and useful.
Is it useful for students to learn how to learn by themselves ?	The course is quite packed, we are preparing for (some of us) tertiary education, it's quite good to learn the language by ourselves, it's a self-experience strategy for the future, for example when you read something, we get used to difficult texts, and we can use that strategy in the future.
So what you learn now will help you in the future ?	Exactly.
Do you notice that your teacher tries to develop your indepenent learning skills ?	Almost every day she refers us to the LLC. After some exercises in the class, she makes us imagine that we will have to read thick books in the future and to use that

	strategy.
Do you think you are good at learning by yourself ?	Not really, one thing is the laziness. If you work by yourself, you leave difficult things, you think are not important, but they will come up in the test.
Do you ever use the ILRC ?	I Don't know it.
Do you have any suggestions ?	I don't have much time to explore the LLC, I just keep using the same things. I think there should be more TOEFL and IELTS materials.
How can we make people use more or different materials ?	The teacher should encourage students.
Did you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	Not at all, you have levels on the textbooks, quite easy. Also the assistants are quite helpful and they know a lot of the materials.

Interview 14	*Class 1*
What do you do in the LLC ?	Graded readers, I don't like using computers to learn a language, but I like computers. I tried 'Business English'. It's not interactive enough, I truly believe to realy improve is not by correcting yourself, but by assimilating a lot of data, reading, watching TV, by knowing how you should spell, how to write you will autocorrect yourself. After a while I will use new worlds.
So input is the most important thing ?	Even if 90% of the input goes in into one ear, out of the other, slowly slowly this helps. I don't know if it works for others.
How do you try to get as much input as possible ?	Reading, watching TV, speaking with native speakers, although they don't correct you. Even my wife doesn't correct me. How can you know you made a mistake? Even when you say you don't mind them correcting you. I think you should read easy English. You're getting used to reading, you feel more keen to read in English. You shouldn't begin with English on your level.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	Classroom, it's more interactive, correction. By reading a book, you learn new words or grammatical structurea, by listening and speaking to others, you have more input, more different kinds of learning. Reading might be boring.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	I noticed that they try to make us aware of this by saying it to us, saying that the course only lasts 3 months, you should find out the best way for you the best way to learn English. Although for me I know that the best way is by speaking and speaking and speaking.
But you don't need a classroom for that. Are there any other ways your teacher is explicitly trying to develop your independent learning skills ?	But in class I get more correction. Yes, it's more efficient. She shows us what is the most efficient way of learning English, during and after the course. Also strategies for reading, recoring tapes etc.
Will you use these strategies after the course finishes ?	Not all of them , but some are useful for me, like writing new words in a notebook and reading them every day.
Do you think it's important for a course like this to develop learner independence?	Yes, you might get used to only learn while you're in the course, and then forget after. By insisting on the fact that you should know which is the most efficient way to learn by yourself, is useful for the rest of you life.
Can a LLC help with this ?	Yes, there are a lot of materials. By having a variety of materials, enables students with different needs to use their own techniques and strategies.

Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ? Any suggestions?	A little bit. Where to find for example material about prepositions, or it's not exactly what you want. I usually ask at the counter. Then there's no problem. More graded readers. The level is okay.

Interview 15	*Class 3*
What do you do in the LLC ?	Homework, I read sometimes, use the computers. The grammar roms. It's good, but maybe the computers are too old. I prefer Pc's.
Why do you do your homework here ?	At home it's very busy. This is a good place to do homework. Here I have the materials, and people. I can practise my speaking and listening.
What is more important, the work in the classroom or what you do by yourself ?	Classroom, because of the speaking. I don't speak a lot outside the class.
This course tries to teach people how to learn English. Do you experience that ?	Yes. Our teacher shows us materials and strategies for studying, I can apply this anywhere. I am my boss.
Is it important, in a course like this?	Yes, maybe it's the most important part, because in the class you can't develop all the material. My self-learning is an important part of my learning, both during and after the course.
Does your teacher often refer you to the LLC ?	Yes, he puts up signs and refers to the special of the week. He often tells us to go to the SAC.
Will you be able after the course to learn English by yourself ?	Yes, maybe I have questions, but I'll come here. There are enough materials here.
Do you find it difficult to work by yourself ?	I don't think so. This course definitely helped me to develop this.
Do you know the ILRC ?	In the beginning I used it. I know the library now, the materials in the SAC, I don't need it anymore.
Do you have any suggestions ?	Upgrade the computers.
Do you find it difficult to find the right materials ?	No, or I ask someone here.

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(one of the tasks in the model at the extreme of the processing dimenson) require more time than tasks such rephrasing or listening clozes (represented lower on the processing dimension. Second, it is not entirely clear that more encoding always takes more time in the way suggested in the model. The 'linguistic production' dimension starts with nonverbal, to oral, to written. It is not clear from the task examples how for example a recall cloze task requires less encoding than free oral production. One might assume that the degree of encoding depends not only on the task but also on the input and the difference between the two. For example an input-task combination of reading-writing might require less encoding than reading-speaking.

Fourthly, the allocation of tasks to various parts of the model seems arbitrary. To give one example, both grammatical judgments and structural analysis are represented together, although they probably involve different degrees of processing and most probably different kinds of processing.

Next, altough not necessarily a weakness of the model, it leaves aside the issue of learner differences and socio-affective factors influencing intake, instead providing a cognitive account.

This leads us to the last point, namely that Chaudron's model is heavily based on the information processing paradigm. Connectionist theorists, for example, would interpret the influence of the various tasks in the model quite differently.

Nevertheless the model is a very worthwhile attempt to represent the influences of tasks in terms of processing and encoding considerations. One could hypothesise (which is what Chaudron appears to do, implicitly), that the more demanding tasks lead to greater intake. This, however, would require further investigation.

Finally, Sato & Jacobs (1992) investigated intake from a neurobiological perspective and aimed to link the process of intake to particular mental operations localised in specific areas of the brain. They identified the nucleus reticularis thalami (NRT) as that area of the brain that seems to facilitate processing in other areas of the brain known to be involved in (language) learning and production, including the hippocampus, the cerebellum, the basal ganglia, and the cingulate gyrus. The authors propose that the NRT functions as a "gating mechanism" that allows or inhibits information flow to these areas. As such the NRT can be said to facilitate intake from input in a literal sense. Their assertion, however, that 'The key assumption here is that information ascending through the NRT to the cerebral cortex constitutes intake (or at least potential intake)' casts some doubt on their own claims as it shows that by adding the afterthought between brackets, the authors make a distinction, perhaps implicitly, between what enters the system and aspects of that information that may be used for language learning. Although the authors admit that 'The NRT's posited role in language acquisition is at present neither directly observable nor testable' (p.287), identifying the neurobiological correlates of the intake process is a promising approach to arriving at a more precise, and meaningful interpretation of the processes that intake is said to metaphorise.

Input, stimuli

The authors cited above talk about stimuli and input interchangeably. Input seems to be preferred in the second language literature, whereas stimuli is the general term used in cognitive psychology. The role of input is acknowledged by researchers with different perspectives on L2 acquisition. All agree that some form of input is needed for language learning to occur (cf. Gass 1997). How this happens is an area of contention. Gregg (2001) writes about this: 'It is uncontroversial that a learner needs input in order to acquire a language...Unfortunately the consensus stops about there. How much input is necessary? What kind of input? Under what conditions need it be provided?...' (p.167). Another important question would be what exactly is meant by input.

Sharwood Smith defines it as '...the potentially processable language data which are made available by chance or by design, to the language learner' (1993, p. 167). Gregg (2001, p.167) defines it as '...information that is fed into an input-output device; the output is grammar'. Carroll (2001) uses the word stimuli and defines it as '...all...observable instantiations of the second language' (p.8). She reserves the word input for stimuli that have been intaken. It is not a physical stimulus but, like intake, a mental representation available

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for internal processors to use. Input is different from intake in that the results of internal processing are input to other processors, where the result of that processing is again input to other processors, and so on.

Some authors (e.g. VanPatten 1996; Krashen 1982) use the term input to mean comprehensible, meaning-bearing input and thus make a qualitative distinction between different kinds of information or stimuli that reach the learner. This is what Faerch, Haastrup, and Phillipson (1984) refer to when they write that comprehensible input is necessary for learning.

Perception, apperception, detection, noticing

It is clear that humans do not perceive all the stimuli around them, or at least not to the same extent, as this would soon lead to an information overload (some stimuli cannot even be perceived by humans as our senses are not equiped for them). In some way, certain stimuli get filtered out or do not receive as much weight (a term we will come back to later), as others. Stimuli that do enter the system or do receive enough weight, result in a mental representation (it is 'in the brain' instead of 'out there'). This mental representation (more on representation later) is 'encoded' or transducted in electrical signals or neuronal activity, that the brain uses for its internal processing. This is done by cells in the sense organs (neurons) called receptors. This mental representation is what Carroll (2001) calls intake. It appears to be not dissimilar to what in cognitive psychology (and also by some SLA researchers, e.g. Tomlin & Villa 1994) is called detection.

A discussion has been on-going about whether detection can take place without awareness of the stimuli. We will review this issue below. Suffice it to say here that certain SLA researchers (e.g.Schmidt 1990, 2001, Robinson 1995) advocate the position that noticing with awareness is necessary for learning to take place. Gass (ibidem) calls the first stage in her model 'apperceived' input or 'noticed' input and for some, intake is thus related to (and for others it is easy to be confused with) stimuli that the recipient is aware of. It is important to point out that others make a clear distinction between a stage where the stimuli simply enter the system and a later stage where the learner may be aware of them.

The word perception was also used in the definitions above and in SLA research in general as a neutral term denoting what is heard, or read. In its more specific meaning derived from cognitive psychology it denotes the way that humans 'see' the world, on the basis of stimuli and what the brain does with them. We see patches of black and white, but we perceive a book. Explain how this is different from detection.

Availability and mental representations

In some of the definitions cited above, once stimuli have entered the system they are said to be 'available' for further processing. As described earlier, stimuli are transduced into neuronal activity which the brain uses to make decisions and they can thus be said to be mental representations and to be 'available'. It is important to distinguish this type of mental representation from what most SLA researchers (implicitly or explicitly) refer to by using this term, namely the *result* of the processing of these mental representations, either rules or procedures, or some form of knowledge. One SLA researcher who is explicit about this is VanPatten. He defines a mental representation as '...the largely unconscious repreresentation of any aspect of the linguistic system in the learner's head. This representation may or may not exist as a rule, paradigm, and so on' (1996, p.10).

Processing

Many SLA researchers agree that language is *processed* in some way, but there is great difference in what phenomena this term is applied to. Coming from Latin *procedere* and meaning to go forwards, to proceed, it can denote any type of change in a mental representation. With regards to learning, in its most literal meaning it refers to neural activity. Stimuli, for example, need to be processed in some way, in order to become perceived.

SLA researchers have used the term more broadly to apply to mental operations performed on language stimuli (as opposed to sound stimuli, so on perceived information, rather than on detected information), from early stages of (for example) pattern recognition to later stages such as hypothesis testing and comparing new information with current knowledge. One could argue (albeit somewhat cynically) that the word processing has been applied to (the dynamic aspects) of cognition in general. It may be more fruitful to refer

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to the exact mental operations that take place (i.e. detection, perception, recognition, comparing) rather than use the blanket term 'processing'.

Integration, assimilation

A similar lack of clarity exists with regards to terms such as integration and assimilation. Many SLA researchers (including the ones cited above) talk about the 'integration (or assimilation) of new knowledge'. It is unclear what this refers to and when it takes place. Does it refer to retention of a lexical item and its meaning? If so, retention in working memory for further 'processing' or in long term memory for subsequent recall? Does it refer to the deduction of a grammatical rule? To a strenghtening of a neural path (cf. Logan's instance theory (1988)? Likewise, does it happen after a certain stage has been reached (such as in Gass's model where intake is 'assimilated linguistic material' and occurs after comprhension of the input)? Or can some aspects of new knowledge be learned by mere exposure before they are comprehended (cf. Reber 1967, 1989, 1992)? What is 'new knowledge'? If we are not sure what gets detected and perceived, then how can we describe this knowledge and how it fits in or integrates with existing knowledge?

The purpose of the above paragraph is not to deny the importance of theorising about second language acquisition, but to highlight the lack of clarity inherent in terms like those used in our field. In this research we will aim to use them specifically and consistently.

Link **these two**

Cognitive models and second language acquisition theory

Over the years a number of cognitive models of second language acquisition have been developed. Sometimes these have been represented as explicit models. At other times one can infer the position of the author with regards to the underlying cognitive model that is adhered to. Below we will briefly discuss a number of cognitive models that have been influential in second language acquisition research.

Earlier information processing models such as that by Broadbent (1958) have two main characteristics: attention is limited (i.e. attending to stimuli uses up resources from a finite pool), and the allocation of attention is effortful. Because of the limited (attentional) capacity of such models, not all information is processed and attention is allocated selectively to filter out unwanted stimuli before they enter the system. In other limited capacity models information gets discarded *after* it has been processed for meaning. Such models are called late selection (as opposed to early selection) limited capacity models. Limited capacity models also differ in how the allocation of attention is perceived; i.e. models such as Broadbent's see it as effortful or controlled whereas other models (e.g. Shiffrin & Schneider 1977) see it as automatic. Limited capacity models (both early and late, automatic and controlled) have been and continue to be very influential in SLA research and theory-based pedagogy. However, there is now considerable evidence against such models (Cowan 1988).

Depth of processing is a theory that attempts to explain learning (as opposed to mere information processing) that operates on a limited-capacity basis and that has been often referred to in SLA literature (e.g. Joe 1998). It was first put forward by Craik & Lockhart (1972) and was later expounded in a number of articles and books (e.g. Craik & Tulving 1975, Cermak & Craik 1979). Depth of processing theory claims that the way information gets processed will to a large extent determine learning, where more elaborate forms of processing lead to more learning. What one remembers can be '...regarded as the byproduct of perceptual processing; (...) the resulting memory trace may be more or less elaborate depending on the number and qualitative nature of the analyses carried out on the stimulus (Craik & Tulving 1995, p.270), and: '...stimuli that are attended to, fully analyzed, and enriched by associations or images yield a deeper encoding of the event, and a long-lasting trace' (ibidem p.270). A number of problems with the depth of processing model have been identified. Baddeley (1990) notes that it is difficult to determine to what depth information has been processed. Even where it is possible to do so, it is not always clear how to interpret it as what may be shallow processing in one situation may be deep and meaningful processing in another, depending on the type of retrieval the learner expects to have to perform. In addition, research has showed improved learning (for example through task repetition) without a change in processing depth. Baddeley (ibidem) points out that for some types of learning the forming of association is more important for an increase in performance. This may well be true for a great deal of language learning too.